

Interfaith Environmental Action in  
Vermont:  
A Service-Learning Project with  
Vermont Interfaith Power and Light

ES 401  
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## **I. Introduction**

The relationship between the major organized religions and the environmental movement has historically been precarious. Lynn White, Jr., in his seminal essay “Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,”<sup>1</sup> argues that in order to confront the impending environmental crisis, humans must critique their attitudes toward nature. He contended that the anthropocentrism of the Judeo-Christian tradition has historically justified humans’ exploitation of nature, thus setting the cultural terms for the current level of environmental destruction. Premised upon this school of thought, many in the environmental sector have viewed religious communities and authorities as more of an opposing force than as an ally.

However, the popularity of this controversial thesis, coupled with the social action culture of the 1960s and ‘70s, helped to generate a discourse on the role of religion in nature and the environment. In the subsequent decades, many religious communities have sought to establish the basis for their involvement in environmental concerns, even if not always choosing to associate themselves with the “environment movement” as such. Many faith-based communities, ranging from individual congregations to national or international religious coalitions, have begun to frame environmentalism as a faith issue. Members of these communities feel that it is their responsibility to care for the earth as God’s creation.

In September 1986 the World Wildlife Fund sponsored a religious leaders’ conference, “Religion and Nature Interfaith Ceremony,” in Assisi, Italy. Having representatives from the world’s five major religions—Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism,

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<sup>1</sup>Lynne White, “Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis,” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-7.

Islam, and Hinduism—the conference sought to “celebrate the dignity of nature and the duty of every person to live harmoniously within the natural world.”<sup>2</sup> The ultimate goal of this conference was to unite historically diverse and often conflicting forces towards one global vision—salvation of the earth on which we all depend for life. This marked the beginning of a trend towards creation of similar conferences that united the secular and sacred communities of the globe by raising awareness concerning consumption patterns, climate change, and other environmental issues.<sup>3</sup>

In 1990, as part of his World Peace Day message, Pope John Paul II issued a call to action among religious leaders and individuals on the issue of environmental action in the name of protecting God’s creation: the earth. This statement, along with the ‘Open Letter to the American Religious Community’ that was issued in 1991 by 32 Nobel laureates in an attempt to mobilize the powerful religious community in the United States, served as the beginning of the religious environmental movement. This letter focused on the scientific community’s concern over the process of global climate change. In an effort to appeal to the religious communities of the United States, they stated, ‘We are close to committing, many would argue we are already committing, what in religious language is sometimes called Crimes against Creation.’<sup>4</sup>

Many religious networks focusing on environmental advocacy and protection have since formed, including ones focusing on specific religions or denominations as well as many that are interfaith. The Eco-Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches was founded in the mid-1980s and later grew into the National Religious

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<sup>2</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (New York: Longman, Inc., 2000), 138-9.

<sup>3</sup> Gary Gardner, “Invoking the Spirit: Religion and Spirituality in the Quest for a Sustainable World,” in *Worldwatch Institute Report 2002*, ed. Jane Peterson (Washington D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> National Religious Partnership for the Environment, “The History of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment,” <http://www.nrpe.org/history.html>, Accessed 11/16/04.

Partnership for the Environment. Other similar organizations that address issues of faith and the environment have been founded over the past twenty years, such as the United Catholic Conference, the Evangelical Environmental Network, and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life. These organizations have taken a faith-based perspective on the issue of environmental protection, many of them focusing specifically on the subject of global climate change. Moreover, many of these groups have gained national and international acclaim for their innovative approaches to relating their faiths to climate change such as the “What Would Jesus Drive?” campaign organized by the Evangelical Environmental Network.

The Interfaith Power and Light organization, which has several different chapters throughout the United States, is one such organization that specifically focuses on climate change and taps into their members’ sense of responsibility to protect God’s creation and the earth. They work to educate congregations about the faith perspective on pertinent environmental issues, as well as disseminating scientific information on climate change, energy efficiency, and conservation. Finally, Interfaith Power and Light creates a network of green-energy suppliers that ecologically-minded religious institutions can contact to provide services for their buildings.

Vermont Interfaith Power and Light (VIPL) is a branch of the national organization that is currently in the early stages of its development. Their goals are to bring together the religious institutions throughout the state and to minimize Vermont’s contribution to global climate change by promoting efficient appliances, conservation, the use of renewable energy, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions<sup>5</sup>. Our work with VIPL is part of the Environmental Studies Senior Seminar at Middlebury College in Fall

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<sup>5</sup> Vermont Interfaith Power and Light, “Vermont Interfaith Power and Light Brochure,” 2003.

2004. The purpose of this report is to facilitate the continued expansion of this organization and their goals of bringing religious leaders to the forefront of the environmental movement in Vermont.

Our objectives include surveying religious organizations to assess their level of concern about global climate change and actions taken within their communities to reduce their impact on the environment. We also hope to elucidate the religious motivations for such actions and the more overarching connection between faith and stewardship. After interviewing various Vermont's religious communities of different denominations, we present in this report a picture of these faith-based environmental initiatives as well as the obstacles that religious communities are currently facing in their efforts to undertake such projects. Through our research, we have identified trends in denominational involvement in environmental activities across Vermont and have made recommendations to VIPL based our findings. These trends may help VIPL concentrate their efforts in engaging a more diverse constituency. We have created both a resource kit and a website to provide VIPL and these religious communities with materials to facilitate increased involvement in environmental stewardship.

## **II. Methods**

### *Preliminary Survey Methods*

A list of 540 religious communities was obtained from the Vermont Ecumenical Society (VES). From this list, we determined a proportional representation of most religious groups within each county throughout the state by dividing the number of institutions in each denomination by the total number of institutions in the county. Those faiths not represented, such as Baha'i, Buddhist and many Jewish affiliations were included in addition to the established proportional data. Within each county congregations were contacted for preliminary phone interviews; they were chosen on a random basis within each religious denomination. We called over 200 religious establishments and conducted a total of 102 preliminary interviews (Appendix A).

The interviews were generally conducted with the head of the religious establishment, though some were conducted with staff or elders of the facility. The preliminary interview included questions regarding church demographics, contact information, and a series of questions addressing connections between environmental and religious issues, with an emphasis on global climate change (See Appendix B for questionnaire). At the end of each interview, a value representing the level of environmental consciousness and involvement of the congregation was tallied. Out of the eight questions asked, six regarding the stewardship activities in the institution were valued at one point each. Consequently, scores were given on a basis from zero to six, with a score of zero denoting no environmental involvement and a score of six indicating the highest environmental involvement possible. For example, an institution that recycles, conducts religious services that address the theme of global climate change, and has an



environmental component to their education program, such as the Richmond Congregational Church, would receive a score of 3 out of 6.

### *In-depth Interviews*

In-depth interviews were conducted with highly involved (high scoring) religious institutions within Addison and Chittenden counties. These two counties were chosen because of their proximity to Middlebury College. Interviews were carried out at the Jericho Congregational Church, the South Burlington All-Saints Church, First United Methodist Church in Burlington, the Sunray Zen Center in Shelburne, the United Church of Lincoln, First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, VT, Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist, Richmond Congregational Church, and Addison County Friends Meeting House in Middlebury, VT (Appendix C, Figure 1). At the interviews, we talked with the religious leader and/or congregants of the place of worship. Themes that were addressed included (1) specific initiatives, elements of worship service, scriptures, etc. that address caring for creation, environmentalism, energy efficiency, and/or social responsibility; (2) motivation; (3) leadership; (4) obstacles; (5) connection to the larger goals of the church or denomination; and (6) involvement in interfaith network, presently and interest for the future. Interviews were written up in a field-notes format and trends were analyzed (Appendix D).

### *GIS and Excel Analysis*

Using Microsoft Excel and information obtained from the preliminary interviews, we calculated a weighted involvement value for each religious establishment. This value

was determined by multiplying the involvement score by the size of the congregation. If congregation size was reported as number of families, we multiplied the number of families reported by two and added half the number of families to that value. This was done because family size is variable, so we made the assumption that the typical family contained somewhere between one and five people. For example, an Episcopalian church with a monthly membership reported as three-hundred families would be multiplied by two (because there are usually at least two people in a family) to obtain a value of six-hundred. Then, one-hundred and fifty would be added to the six-hundred to account for their being at least one child in most of the families, to obtain a final reported congregation size of seven-hundred and fifty.

Average involvement scores per county were obtained by taking the mean non-weighted involvement score for all religious establishments in a given county. As well, the weighted scores for each congregation were averaged for all denominations per county. We also used Excel to produce graphical representations of weighted versus average involvement levels within each county and statewide by religious denomination, positive responses to the preliminary interview questions on average and by denomination, and environmental activities carried out by each denomination.

Next, we used ArcView GIS software to create statewide maps showing the population vs. survey sample size of a given county (data obtained from United States Census Bureau), the average involvement score of each county, the weighted average involvement score of each county, the towns where in-depth interviews were conducted, and the towns where the top environmental activities are being pursued by congregations (See Results).

### *Website Construction*

We developed a website using the DreamWeaver Software package where we posted overviews of our project and VIPL, maps of earth stewardship involvement and activities in Vermont, profiles of the nine in-depth case studies, and resource kit materials including useful internet links, literature, quotations and easy-reference fact sheets about what various denominations are doing in Vermont. This website targets congregation leaders and members who are looking for more information on earth stewardship in general and in Vermont and ways to begin stewardship activities in their own congregations.

### *Resource Kit Development*

We created a resource kit that includes a list of web-based resources, a list of faith-based literature on the environment, quotations from various religious groups on the earth and faith, and easy-reference fact sheets for specific denominations about their official stance on the environment as well as information on what types of stewardship activities groups in these denominations are doing in Vermont. These resources provide information on faith-based environmental action in general and also ideas for initiating stewardship activities. The materials in the resource kit target both congregation leaders and members.

### **III. Results**

Population data were obtained from the United States Census Bureau for each county in Vermont. From this, we found that the number of religious institutions we interviewed per county coincides with the size of the population. For example, Chittenden County with the largest population (148,990) had the highest number of completed preliminary interviews (n=22). Addison County (population 36,835) was over represented (n=10) due to its proximity to Middlebury College (Appendix C, Figure 2).

Non-weighted and weighted involvement scores ranged from 1-4 per county out of a total of 6. Average non-weighted and weighted involvement scores per county were 2.65 and 2.56 respectively. The highest scored county was Grand Isle (n=1, score of 4) while the lowest scored county was Essex (n=1, score of 1). Within Grand Isle, the highest (and only) scored religious organization was a United Methodist Church. The second highest scoring county was Bennington (n=8, score of 3.75). The highest scoring institutions in this county were a United Church of Christ and a synagogue, which are both amongst the top four scoring religious communities surveyed throughout Vermont. The only place of worship surveyed in Essex County was a Roman Catholic Church, which is the second lowest scoring denomination (Appendix C, Figures 3, 4 and 5).

For denominations across the state, values obtained ranged from 0-4.75 for non-weighted scores, and 0-5.16 for weighted scores. Average involvement scores per denomination were 2.03 and 2.33 for weighted and non-weighted scores respectively. The highest scored denomination was Unitarian Universalist (n=4, score of 5.16) while the lowest scored denomination was Lutheran (n=1, score of 0). However, Roman

Catholics (n=19) comprised a much larger sample size than Lutherans, and were consistently scored low (average weighted score= 0.67) (Appendix C, Figure 6).

Out of all of the denominations surveyed through our preliminary questionnaire, 71% have environmental services as part of their religious practices. Twenty-six percent of the religious establishments claimed they held services that focused on global climate change to some extent. A high percentage of congregations also stated that they have an environmental component to their education programs (49%) and have carried out activities that promote environmental consciousness (57%). Almost 1/3 of all places interviewed expressed some sort of obstacle present (34%) (Appendix C, Figure 7).

Although many religious establishments answered positively to question 1 of our preliminary survey, less than 50% of the following denominations did not: Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Pentecostals. Looking specifically at global climate change (question 2), 100% of Zen Buddhist and Unitarian Universalist congregations mentioned global climate change in one or more of their services. Most denominations do not have an action group in their congregation that promotes environmental activity in the community (question 3). Many congregations responded (greater than 50%) that they did have an environmental component to their education program (question 4). Few congregations said that they were affiliated with a regional or national association that looks at religious and environmental issues (question 5) (Appendix C, Figure 8).

Out of the 57% that responded positively to question 6, which looked into environmental actions executed within the congregation, it was found that eight main actions were taken (Appendix C, Figure 9). Unitarian Universalists partake in most of these activities, while Baha'i and Lutherans (both with small sample sizes) were not

involved with any (Appendix C, Figure 10). Geographically, most actions occur along the I-89 and Route-7 corridors, which run through the major towns of Vermont. The highest concentration of activities takes place in Burlington (Appendix C, Figures 11a and 11b).

#### **IV. Participant Observation and Personal Reflections**

Over the course of our fieldwork, we visited nine religious congregations throughout Addison and Chittenden counties. The communities that we visited ranged from a Zen Buddhist Center in Shelburne, to a small congregational Church in Richmond, to a large United Methodist Church in downtown Burlington. When conducting our in-depth interviews at these various congregations, we usually attended their worship service first and then had informal conversations with the religious leader and/or some of the congregants. These informal interviews took many different forms. One of the first in-depth interviews that we conducted at the Jericho Congregational Church was transformed from what we had expected to be a one-hour discussion with the Pastor and some congregants into a three and a half hour dialogue about personal stewardship beliefs and values. This intensive conversation was followed by a short visit to one of the congregant's homes to have a closer look at how she and her family interpret their responsibilities to live simply on the earth. Ann Gnagey and her husband Tom Baribault practice simple living by utilizing a gray water system as well as passive landscaping.

At the Richmond Congregational Church, we gathered during the coffee hour after the service with some of the congregants who were particularly interested in environmental initiatives (some of whom had been participating in a Voluntary Simplicity class offered through the church).

The Middlebury Friends Meeting provided an eye-opening experience for one of the members of our group who was intrigued by the unique approach that Quakers take to their worship services. He experienced for the first time the hour-long, mostly silent worship service during which members of the Meeting are invited to make comments or

statements based on a series of questions that is asked at the beginning of the meeting. Following the meeting time, one of the congregants was generous enough to take some time to participate in our in-depth interview.

Throughout our research process, members of our group experienced many personal and emotional reactions to our work. Whether these reactions were to the worship services that we attended, or simply the topics of discussion that arose over the course of our nine in-depth interviews, some of these reactions and reflections are documented below.

#### *Judith Schutter*

For one of my first phone interviews, I called a Methodist minister at a church in Lake Elmore. This was especially meaningful for me because my father is a Methodist pastor, and I discovered a lot by listening to this woman speak about her congregation and reflecting on my own experiences. Our conversation helped both of us think about how our belief in the importance of environmental stewardship causes congregations, and pastors in particular, to engage in certain actions.

The reverend was very friendly towards me and responded to my questions cordially, even though she considered her congregation to be more focused on the Bible than promoting environmental issues. From my perspective, they do engage in a fair share of sustainable activities, even if they are modest. In the church, they use Kerry candles<sup>6</sup> instead of wax candles because they burn cleaner. They are also frugal with their spending and try to keep energy bills down by turning off lights. Generally,

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<sup>6</sup> Kerry candles are handcrafted smokeless, odorless, and drip-free liquid candles manufactured in Ireland. Information is available online at <http://www.kerrycandles.ie>.



members of the congregation engage in environmental activities like recycling on their own.

I am glad I got the chance to speak with the minister because I learned about her understanding of her role in her congregation and also recognized my own beliefs and experiences, as a Methodist, in her words. She related the environment to her faith by saying that it comes up 'all the time' in scriptures and prayers that foster the internalization of the notion of stewardship by the congregation. She said, 'it will be a part of us.' This emphasis on individual responsibility and accountability towards God and no one else seem very familiar. My father, who is a Methodist minister, is a strong environmentalist personally but purposefully refrains from using the pulpit to promote any sort of political agenda. He encourages people to think about and act upon the messages contained in the scriptures and often refers to nature in his prayers. In both my church at home and the Methodist church in Lake Elmore, people bring up the changes of the seasons during time for sharing joys and concerns. Nature is something we should be thankful for and care for, but it is up to the individual to decide exactly what that implies. This does not mean that congregations cannot engage in environmentally responsible actions together. On the contrary, their sense of moral obligation to be good stewards of the earth can provide a base for conversation and action, especially when you get groups together like the trustees who have the specific job of making budgetary decisions and the power to decide how much they want to make care of environment a priority. Each person within a congregation serves a role. What unites them is their faith and ability to take actions collectively and individually.

*Lauren Ziegler*

As we approached Jericho Congregational Church on Sunday morning, set in the traditional New England town green near the quaint general store with kids playing in the leaves out front, it would seem like the least intimidating place possible. However, when I found out that Judith, Trevor, and I were not just interviewing Pastor Anderson after Sunday Service, but rather that we would be doing a group interview of about 8-10 congregants along with Pastor Anderson, my blood pressure elevated as I envisioned awkward silences and painful pauses. Although my mind knew that it would be great for our research on personal religious reflections and environmental ethics, my unfamiliarity in a sacred setting and general hesitancy towards organized religion generated anxiety at the thought of a group discussion. While raised Methodist in my childhood, teenage complacency coupled with a few negative experiences of intolerance disguised in religious text have made me a bit skeptical or uncomfortable in religious settings. I try to be open to a variety of sacred and secular experiences and like to analyze religious texts and traditions with friends; moreover, having volunteered for Habitat for Humanity, I can acknowledge the charitable work that faith communities accomplish. Unfortunately, the oftentimes inappropriate negative actions that are taken in the name of one's faith, seem to resonate longer in my consciousness. With this personal perspective, I sat first in the pews during the service and later downstairs waiting for the interviewees to gather, quite apprehensive and feeling a bit out of place.

Then, an elderly man who caught my eye as I perused the announcement board leaned in to say that he didn't think that he knew me and introduced himself. Mr. Gnagey, a senior congregant who was there for the discussion along with his wife,

daughter, son-in-law, and grandson, was intrigued by my reply that I was an environmental studies major. “Was I,” he inquired, “interested in things such as farming and water and pollution?” An affirmative reply brought a smile to his face as he proudly recounted a story about how when he was younger he told his father that they needed to cultivate in rows, alternating fallow area rather than across an entire hillside as to allow for regeneration of the soil and to prevent rain from flooding out all the soil into the nearby stream. Only after his father refused to listen and a storm ripped out most of the dirt down to the stream, as well as much of the vegetation, did the crops get replanted in the “right” way. “Was this the sort of stuff I meant by environmental studies?” he asked, smiling warmly. “Well, yes, runoff and agriculture are definitely part of things that I study,” I replied, content in the story-time that had unfolded and the satisfaction with which the man expressed his personal “environmentalism.” By this time, the interviewees had assembled around the table, and so our conversation ended, but the enthusiasm and warmth that Mr. Gnagey had expressed was soon reiterated by other congregants as they expressed what their Christian faith meant to them and how it shaped their environmental actions.

The interview itself was better than I ever could have expected. Congregants ranged from those who were similarly involved in agriculture to an animal-enthusiast who works with a wildlife rehabilitation organization to an engineer at NRG, a company that designs wind-power technologies. Each had their own distinct interpretation of their faith and motivations for acting in the manner that they did, but along with the enthusiasm and acceptance the congregants expressed for Earth stewardship came general themes that echoed in many responses.

One issue of contention that interviewees seemed to wrestle with, and with which I identified strongly, was the manner in which one dispenses the knowledge they have about “environmental issues” or ways they feel faith connects to ecological sustainability. They sought to strike a balance between “preaching” and passively waiting for others to ask them questions about why they do what they do. This resonated with me because not only have I personally responded negatively to being “preached to” about being a bad Christian and because I struggle with how to educate friends about environmental actions without seeming elitist or hypocritical. This difficulty brought up another quandary: judging others based upon your views of what a good Christian does in terms of living sustainably. Kelly expressed frustration both about conveying information or her sentiments concerning the Earth and her faith without sounding holier than thou and also at expressing this information without alienating her fellow friends and Christians. To illustrate, she said that while working coffee hour, she might just use the paper plates rather than real dishware—which she would prefer to use—if it meant that it made the other person with whom she was working less stressed; thus a compromise was articulated between what one feels is important and caring for fellow mankind if they feel differently about certain topics (i.e. politics, how faith relates to the Earth, etc.).

One final aspect of interest continually spoken of was the idea of familial interconnectedness. Ann Gnagey used a familial analogy to teach Earth stewardship to her kids and her students at school: The Earth is like a coat that your mother makes for you in order for you to survive. If you have a coat like this, that your mom made for you out of love, care, and well-being you should care for it because you love your mom; likewise, we should take care of the Earth because God made it out of love and care.

Congregants continued by expressing how living simply and sustainably, though perhaps not the “coolest” thing for children when in middle school, ultimately generated activities such as chopping wood, gardening, riding bikes, making clothes, etc., that brought the family closer together. In a sense, they expressed a feeling that their families, with decreased consumption, had to be closer because they were more interdependent. I found this idea intriguing because of the implications that it has in terms of how consumption patterns and energy use affects the cohesion of the family unit.

After the discussion dwindled down, largely because people had obligations to get to rather than a dwindling of interest or insight, I left the church re-inspired to the dedication, selflessness, and passion that this spiritually-inspired community had expressed. At least temporarily dissolved were any feelings of skepticism, hesitancy, or alienation, replaced instead by admiration and respect for what these individuals are doing, gratitude for being welcomed to investigate their beliefs, and encouragement for all that these individuals and others like them would be able to accomplish. Their actions and lifestyles often involved conscious sacrifice both in energy, time, and money, but they seemed equally fulfilled by the religious and familial satisfaction, as well as occasional economic benefits, that grew from these ecologically and religiously-minded choices. I was impressed, elated, and humbled, to say the least.

*J. Trevor Cloak*

What a wonderful learning experience this project has been. Coming from a religious background that is not too serious—I am United Methodist but go to church on Christmas and Easter only—this project seemed to be a good way to push my comfort zone and learn a lot more about something that I knew very little about. In addition, it

has been very interesting to see the many different things congregations have been doing in relating their faith to environmental consciousness and awareness.

During the phone interview process, and after hearing about all of the amazing environmental activities different congregations across the state were doing, I began to think about my own congregation at home in Langhorne, PA and wonder whether we had any environmental programs, services or activities. As a member that goes to church on Christmas and Easter solely, I am largely unaware of the services and activities of my church, however, I am pretty certain that it does not have any activities related to the environment. Consequently, I began to pay special attention to those United Methodists I called to see what could be done within my faith. Reverends Charles Graham and Anne Bachman were especially active with their congregants, and by listening to how they related faith and the environment I found it amazing just how much my faith could nurture environmental activism.

Anne's congregation not only mentioned the environment throughout sermons, but also had a Harvest Sunday each fall where the whole congregation celebrated what the environment has given them. They had an outreach committee that worked on Earth Day events and planning, used compact fluorescents in some places, and in general, promoted an environmental consciousness that I saw lacking in my own church. Rev. Graham carried out similar activities within his congregation. Listening to these people speak, I was aware of just how excited I was getting about how religious establishments could be a great conduit to promote environmental activism in the community.

Now at the end of the project, I am thinking about religion in an entirely different light. I cannot wait to go home and try to discuss some of these measures with my own

reverend to see if I can get my congregation to be more active in the environmental realm. It would be very exciting to share some of these stories with the rest of the members of my church and see their responses. The other religious establishments in Vermont have taught me that change, however small, can be made. Religious institutions are key in trying to promote a greater environmental consciousness and already have the infrastructure to reach a large amount of people. I hope that given what I have learned from this project, that perhaps I will be able to make a difference as well.

*Emily Owen*

As both a Christian and an environmentalist, the question of faith and the environment is quite intriguing to me and for this reason I chose to work with VIPL for this service-learning project. Much of my motivation for environmentalism stems from my religious belief that humans are called to be stewards of the earth. I believe firmly that we must consider the planet and its inhabitants as fellow creations of God and therefore treat them with respect.

For example, I see climate change as a completely moral issue within a religious context, an aspect that often is sorely neglected. The moral implications of global warming should be tied to faith just as issues of global poverty, famine, and illness are seen as moral imperatives by religious communities. There are so many national and international programs that help people in terms of food, shelter, clothing, but presenting these problems of inequality from an environmental perspective are foreign to many religious thinkers.

I was curious to see how churches in Vermont reacted to environmental issues and if they were involved or not. I had my doubts – I did not think there would be many stewardship activities in churches for a number of reasons. First, I thought that Christians were afraid of worshipping the earth rather than God (or being perceived that way) if they adopted environmental beliefs as congregations. Second, I also believed that Christianity was firmly rooted in a superiority complex that placed nature under the dominion of humanity. Third, I thought of the church as a static entity resistant to progressive change.

This service-learning project with VIPL ties in closely with my personal interest and passion for Christianity and the environment. When I began the project I was quite doubtful about finding Christians caring for the earth, but I was – thankfully – surprised by our findings. I have had several great conversations with ministers both over the phone and in-person on how they believe that stewardship is important and pertinent to our faith. In the midst of despair over climate change and a lack of religious response to the issue, I was reenergized to find that there are people who share my beliefs! The many conversations I had were extremely fruitful in terms of my own personal fulfillment and I continually was surprised by the number of people I spoke with who were emphatic about earth stewardship as an integral part of their faith.

Through this project, I feel that we are fostering and bringing to light important and neglected connection between faith and the environment. In addition to providing valuable data and resources for VIPL and religious communities in Vermont, this project has given me hope that Christians are indeed concerned about the earth and are taking action.



## **V. Discussion**

Throughout the course of our research, various trends in the realm of environmental initiatives among religious communities have become apparent. Many religious congregations across Vermont are working on similar environmental initiatives, have faced the same obstacles, and view their obligation to care for the environment in the same ways. It is important to identify these general patterns across the state, as well as on a local level, in order for VIPL to understand where their efforts are most needed and should be targeted.

### *Faith and Earth Stewardship*

One of the strongest commonalities amongst the religious institutions statewide is the fact that they serve as a forum for people who have a strong sense of purpose or calling to gather together. Although each religion or denomination has their own understanding of how being a spiritual person calls them to live, they consciously try to apply these beliefs to their actions as individuals and collectively in their congregations.

In general, there was some degree of environmental involvement, such as services related to “Creation” or the environment, use of compact fluorescents, or energy audits on the building, within every religion or denomination that we interviewed. Roman Catholics as a denomination have the largest congregation sizes, yet many times the lowest environmental involvement scores. This is reflected in the weighted involvement score (Appendix C, Figure 6). Consequently, they bring the average involvement scores for the county down. This trend might be explained by the emphasis that Roman Catholic congregations place on “human-oriented” causes like social justice and poverty

as opposed to environmental issues. Unitarian Universalists, Zen Buddhists, Society of Friends, and Jews all had the highest levels of environmental involvement (Appendix C, Figure 6).

While we are hardly experts in the field of religious studies, our group generated a few hypotheses about why these denominational trends are occurring. It seems that if a denomination has explicit founding principles within its faith relating to environmental consciousness and action congregants from this religion had a greater likelihood of getting a higher score of environmental involvement. It also helps if congregations receive support from the structure of their greater religious community. These characteristics help explain why certain religions and denominations, like the Zen Buddhists, Unitarian Universalists, and Quakers scored high.

Presence of religious hierarchy also contributes to the likelihood of a congregation to pursue environmental initiatives. A hierarchical structure can either support or undermine environmental actions among individual congregations. In denominations where principal religious leaders promote creation care, such as Episcopalian and Roman Catholicism, individual congregations would seemingly be more likely to engage in environmental activities. However, this was not a consistent trend. For example, Pope John Paul II called on religious leaders increase their stewardship of the earth. Despite this clear promotion of environmental values by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, the Roman Catholics received an involvement score of below one. One possible explanation for this discrepancy is that hierarchical denominations usually promote numerous issues for their congregations to act upon. The Roman

Catholic hierarchy has thus placed a stronger emphasis on issues such as poverty alleviation and the pro-life movement.

However, in the case of the Episcopalians the hierarchical nature of the denomination has proven to be beneficial in the promotion of earth care activities. The Episcopal Diocese of Vermont has provided individual congregations with numerous resources and information to assist in the creation and implementation of environmental initiatives.

Conversely, denominations of a more congregational nature, such as the United Church of Christ, can also be beneficial or detrimental to the establishment of environmental programs in individual congregations. For example, a small congregational church might only have the resources to focus on one social issue that is of interest to the congregants. If that issue is of an environmental nature then it is likely that this congregation will strongly pursue that interest. However, if their interests lie elsewhere, they are less likely to explore and implement initiatives in a new area, such as environmentalism since congregational churches are less accountable to a higher institutional authority.

When we asked religious leaders about the relationship between their faith and the environment, many hesitated. They readily acknowledged preaching or teaching about certain scriptures, principles, and beliefs that specifically addressed creation and our responsibility towards it but did not generally respond positively to the term “environmental.” This trend is evident in our analysis of positive (“yes”) responses to question 1 in our preliminary survey (Appendix C, Figure 7). Many explained their disdain or hesitancy for the word “environmental” as a result of “environmental”

becoming a heavily loaded word, soaked in politics and images of radical “treehugger” activism; some feel that these connotations detract from their true purpose as a religious institution: to cultivate and direct the spiritual growth of congregants. For that reason, we began to use the words “creation-care” and “earth stewardship” in our interviews and received much better responses.

While most religious leaders readily affirmed their belief that “creation-care” related to their faith, fewer made the transition from discussing it in the theological sense to more practical terms on their own. When we gave examples of ways that congregations could promote environmental consciousness, such as recycling, using compact fluorescents, and energy efficiency, numerous religious leaders admitted that they engage in one or more of these activities (Appendix C, Figures 9 and 10). It became clear, however that the motivation for this was often economic, rather than environmental per se.

### *Examples of Creation-care*

#### A. Preaching & Teaching about Climate Change

An exceptional minority of religious leaders brought up issues like climate change specifically when we spoke with them on the phone or in person. Reverend Fred Edmonds from the Centre Congregational Church in Brattleboro brought up climate change as one of the main issues his congregation was concerned with and referred to it in his sermon. While most religious leaders avoided the term “global warming” in their sermons, a few mentioned how they dealt with issues surrounding global warming and

consumption through informal educational programs.<sup>7</sup> Several congregations have hosted simplicity workshops with the help of Vermont Earth Institute or have hosted guests to address the subject, including Bill McKibben who visited the First United Methodist Church in Burlington in the spring of 2004.

## B. Leadership

Although the pulpit can be an effective way to disseminate the message of earth stewardship to a large number of people, the religious leader's freedom to do so may be limited by resistance among their congregants to hearing sermons that may be construed as political. For this reason, much of the energy for environmental initiatives comes from within the congregation and not necessarily from the religious leadership. Many religious leaders credited members of their congregation with having the motivation and time to put certain environmental projects together, as well as the power to make decisions regarding finances.

## C. Taking Action

Many congregations engage in small-scale collective actions that lighten their impact on the earth. These include recycling paper, using biodegradable/reusable coffee cups, flatware, and towels during coffee hour, as well as saving electricity by turning the lights off and the thermostat down when possible. Several congregations in Vermont also buy recycled paper, drink Fair Trade coffee, compost, and/or encourage carpooling (Appendix C, Figure 10). On a statewide level, most of these activities are occurring in the major cities in Vermont, especially Burlington (Appendix C, Figures 11a and 11b).

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<sup>7</sup> Personal Communication; 11/12/04

This may be because churches in urban areas have a wider resource base and larger population density, which could facilitate networking and funding. Many religious leaders have encouraged congregants to simplify their lifestyles both at home and within their religious buildings, and to minimize consumption, which drives resource depletion and pollution of varying manifestations (See Appendix D- Quaker Interview) In addition to the more common practices and projects, some congregations have devised unique ways to minimize their impact on the environment. These distinctive initiatives include making cider from dropped apples, encouraging eating organic and vegetarian food, using locally harvested wood, and using clean-burning Kerry candles.

The fact that most of these congregations own and maintain buildings, such as sanctuaries, rectories, or temples, provides an opportunity for them to engage in dialogue about the importance of energy efficiency. Several religious communities across the state have made increased energy efficiency and conservation an explicit priority. Whether their building is old or new, many of them have found ways to save energy and often save money. The cost of heating is of particular concern for congregations with old, drafty buildings. Sealing cracks around windows and doors, adding extra insulation, installing radiant heating or zoning the heat are all tactics that congregations have tried in an effort to minimize heating expenses. Building renovations or upgrades seem particularly ideal in terms of providing a time and opportunity for congregations to install new energy-saving technology. Many have begun using compact fluorescent light bulbs in at least part of their building and some have Energy Star appliances or water-saving toilets (Appendix C, Figures 10 and 11b).

Only a few congregations have collectively asked and answered the question about how they can take the next step beyond efficient energy use to clean energy. Although none of the religious institutions that we interviewed have installed wood-pellet furnaces, a couple of congregations indicated an interest in them. Pollution is also a subject that has been addressed by congregations choosing to replace or double-insulate their oil tanks. In addition, the issue of creation care can extend beyond the building walls. Congregants illustrate this by planting trees and not using pesticides on their property.

#### D. Holidays, festivals, and celebrations

The Jewish holiday Tu B'shevat is one example of a specific religious event focused on the connection to the natural world that has become an outlet for environmental initiatives within religious communities. Rabbi Robert Freedman at the Israel Congregation in Manchester emphasized the importance of the Tu B'Shevat ceremony.<sup>8</sup> Traditionally, Jews have used this holiday (which originally marked the time when fruit from trees would be taxed) as an opportunity to plant trees and celebrate the birth of the earth and of the trees by planting trees. According to Jewish law, the fruit of a tree cannot be eaten in the first three years of the tree's life, the fruit from the fourth year belongs to God and beginning in the fifth year the fruit can be eaten. The age of trees is thus measured as beginning on Tu B'Shevat. In more recent years, in geographic locations where tree planting in January and February (the time of year when this holiday usually occurs) is not feasible, individuals and congregations have begun to sponsor tree planting in Israel to commemorate this occasion.

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<sup>8</sup> Personal Communication; 11/4/04.

Although Tu B'Shevat is a Jewish holiday, the concept of tree planting is one that has been adopted by congregations of many different religions and denominations. At the American Baptist and United Methodist Church in Lincoln, Reverend David Wood described an interfaith and inter-denominational tree planting ceremony that took place in the spring of 2002, as a response to the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks. This event was an effort to strengthen community relations and there were representatives present from Buddhism, Wicca, Native American traditions, Islam, and many branches of the Christian faith. As a result of this ceremony, Pastor Wood felt that the action reaffirmed each faith's connection to the Earth and ultimately brought the community closer by finding common ground within the faiths.<sup>9</sup>

### *Motivation*

It was surprising to find that the motivations of religious establishments in carrying out environmental activities were as widespread as the activities themselves. From economic and legal to faith and scripture alone, the reasons why congregants or ministers carried out environmental activities varied greatly. In most cases, however, motivation arose from a combination of different sources.

#### A. Drawing on Scriptures and Traditions

Part of the motivation for congregations to demonstrate earth stewardship originated from a compulsion and/or inspiration by one's faith. Various religious leaders cited specific religious stories or sections of scripture to demonstrate the textual foundation that links their faith to an ecological consciousness. In the Judeo-Christian

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<sup>9</sup> Personal Communication; 11/4/04.



tradition, many leaders including Rabbi Jerry Seidler of the Rutland Jewish Center, Pastor Dick Hibbert of First United Methodist Church of Burlington, and Pastor David Wood of the United Church of Lincoln stressed the idea of the earth as a product of God and God's Creation, and consequently mentioned that it should be highly revered. Religious leaders commonly cited Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and all those who live in it" as justification for earth stewardship. Pastor Hibbert contended that this passage shows the sacredness of the earth by drawing the analogy to the image of the body as a temple; if the body is considered sacred because God created it, likewise, then, the earth should also be cherished as holy.

While few other religious leaders drew an analogy to this extent, explicitly deeming the earth as a sacred body, many were inspired to care for the earth because they felt scripture suggested that the human purpose on Earth is to act as stewards, such as is stated in Genesis 2:15, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it," and Matthew 6:10, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven." Similarly, members of the Judeo-Christian tradition also were motivated into stewardship by scripture-based values which discouraged needless wasting – the value of *bal tashchit* and prevention of needless waste cited by Rabbi Seidler.<sup>10</sup> Others described similar values such as the value of "waste-not, want-not" cited by Jim Llewellyn of Danville Congregational Church<sup>11</sup> and Rev. Edward Hackett of the Rutland United Methodist Church<sup>12</sup>. Though of a very different religious tradition, members of the Buddhist faith felt a similar desire to limit waste in order to increase stewardship (which was expressed under the term consciousness more than stewardship).

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<sup>10</sup> Personal Communication; 11/05/04

<sup>11</sup> Personal Communication; 11/04/04

<sup>12</sup> Personal Communication; 11/04/04

While the motivations for Buddhist stewardship are not based on God's creation, their faith and the central Buddhist (and originally, Hindu) concept of *samsara*, or "circle of rebirth," which binds all beings in a cycle of life, death, and rebirth, was credited with generating an ecological mindfulness likened to stewardship.<sup>13</sup> Sensei Sunyana Graef of the Vermont Zen Center noted that because Buddhists are beckoned in the First Precept "Not to kill but to cherish all Life," their faith rejects the traditional Western dichotomy of Self and Other and implies that there is no delineation or discrimination between "better species."<sup>14</sup> The Buddhist rejection of self-other dichotomies instills the ideals of seeing oneself and all else, including non-human species of the earth, as the same being. Consequently, Buddhism, in Graef's view, suggests a similar consciousness and friendly action towards both humanity and the earth. Similarly, Buddhism also teaches the doctrine of karma, which is fundamentally the law of cause and effect. Since Buddhists believe in the law of interdependent causality, therefore, they are inspired by their faith to be careful not to cause pain to minerals, people, animals, plants, or anything embodied in the earth because it will, in turn, hurt them. Sensei Graef, Zen member Randy Crosby, and Sister True Virtue of the Green Mountain Dharma Center in Hartland-Four-Corners all suggested that Buddhism motivated people not to waste in general, but rather to live simply and refrain from wanton consumption because it damages the earth. The Fifth Precept states: "[Do] Not cause others to take substances that confuse the mind nor to do so [to] oneself but to keep the mind clear." While this precept may have originally been a directive against mind-altering substances, such as alcohol, it can be interpreted more broadly as an anti-consumption principle. The inspiration for lack of waste founded in

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<sup>13</sup> It should be noted, however, that *release* from the world of *samsara* is also central to Buddhist and Hindu thought.

<sup>14</sup> Personal Communication; 11/09/04

Buddhism can prompt outstanding conservation actions. For instance, the Buddhist nuns at the Dharma center drink the water in which their dishes are rinsed so as to eliminate all waste.<sup>15</sup>

As with Buddhism, the Quaker religion plays a very direct role in motivating members of the faith to be environmentally conscious. Two of the Quaker testimonies, namely the testimony of simplicity and the testimony of equity, are integral in establishing this motivation. The testimony of simplicity states that all Quakers should live from the earth as simply as possible, and to leave as small as an ecological footprint on the planet as one is able to accomplish. As Cheryl Mitchell from the Middlebury Friends Community mentioned, it is this principle that causes many Quakers to drive environmentally friendly cars, participate in Green-up days and be more aware about their surrounding environment in general<sup>16</sup>. Direct faith-based motivation also comes from the Quaker faith book, *Faith and Practice*. Once a year, at a meeting, a passage of questions on stewardship is read to all of the members asking them to contemplate their own impact on the environment (see Appendix B). This gets members of the congregation thinking about many different aspects of the environment, but more importantly, puts the emphasis on what they, themselves, are actually doing and how they act environmentally, therefore raising their overall awareness.

## B. Religious Duty and Identity

Somewhat related to faith-based or scripture motivation, Kelly and Barry King of the Jericho Congregational Church expressed a drive to act environmentally in order to

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<sup>15</sup> Personal Communication; 11/09/04

<sup>16</sup> Personal Communication; 10/28/04

appear to be fulfilling the obligations of their faith.<sup>17</sup> In other words, they felt that some people would not necessarily refrain from acting in an environmentally damaging way on their own, but would be compelled by public accountability (i.e. because other members of their faith would see the action as harming Creation, they would be viewed as acting in an inappropriate manner and perhaps even bad Christians). Thus, the Kings articulated a desire to do environmental good in order to socially represent a certain type of person. In this context, religious motivation comes less from a clear scriptural or doctrinal statement, but more from social models of what being a religious person “looks like” in practice.

Unitarian Universalist’s have articulated a set of principles or values to which congregants adhere. The Seventh Principle describes a “respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are all apart.”<sup>18</sup> Unitarians explicitly state that they are not held to any specific traditions or beliefs and so their motivation cannot be described as faith-based. Yet, they do identify themselves as members of an “interdependent web of life” that subsequently results in their environmental consciousness and participation in environmentally-minded activities. As Steve Maier, a Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist said, “the verbalization that humans are in equal status with other living entities is a radical statement that rejects the Judeo-Christian tradition’s hierarchical idea of human stewardship for the earth by specifying an interdependence amongst living things.”<sup>19</sup> So, it is through an identity and kinship with other living members of the earth that encourages Unitarians to live in an environmentally conscious manner.

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<sup>17</sup> Personal Communication; 11/07/04

<sup>18</sup> Unitarian Universalist Seventh Principle Project; <http://www.uuaspp.org/sppabout/html>. Accessed 12/14/04.

<sup>19</sup> Personal Communication; 11/09/04

Other individuals were motivated because of personal beliefs and experiences regarding the environment. Reverend David Wood from the United Church of Lincoln said that he was environmentally involved because of growing up during the oil shortage of the late 1970s, and remembering what it was like to be without resources. He felt that growing up in this time period, when environmental issues were of top priority to a large part of the country, sculpted the way he looks at the environment today.<sup>20</sup>

Legal issues and outside organizations, while not as prevalent, also played a role in motivating congregants to act in an environmental fashion. (Appendix B-Jericho Interview).

### C. Economic

Economic motivation appeared to play a role in the majority of congregations that we interviewed. Lowering operational costs was extremely important in informing the decision to implement a particular activity. For example, many interviewed establishments used compact fluorescent light bulbs as opposed to regular bulbs simply because it saved them money- not necessarily as a result of a desire to protect the environment. For the same reason, many older establishments have performed (or plan to perform) energy audits of their buildings in order to reduce the cost of heating in the winter. Although these activities were initially motivated by monetary benefits, they are also validated by the congregants' beliefs in creation care.

This was also the case with the congregants themselves. For example, Todd, a 21 year-old congregant from the Jericho Congregational Church, retrofitted his car to run solely on biofuel. When asked why, he responded that it was because he was able to get

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<sup>20</sup> Personal Communication; 11/04/04

his gas for free via used vegetable oil from local restaurants.<sup>21</sup> Similar examples exist within many other congregations across the state. Consequently, VIPL would do well to focus their energies on promoting activism that is economically as well as environmentally beneficial for places of worship and congregants alike.

### *Obstacles and Challenges*

Throughout our interviews and discussions, religious leaders cited a number of challenges that interfered with (and prevented) earth stewardship activities in their religious communities. It should also be noted that many leaders responded that there were not any obstacles to the implementation of these activities. This, however, may be attributed largely to the fact that many of these groups had low levels of interest in earth stewardship and therefore did not face obstacles. Conversely, the data suggests that approximately 70% of Unitarian Universalist Congregations, who received the highest mean involvement score, faced obstacles when attempting to implement environmental programs (Appendix C, Figure 8).

Common obstacles that were mentioned include cost, disagreement over issues, the desire to avoid being “political”, and an emphasis on personal morality and salvation, rather than on public social issues. Other obstacles include apathy, age, lack of resources and knowledge, aesthetics, and a gap between beliefs and actions.

The obstacle that was mentioned most frequently was cost and the economic commitment involved in implementing environmentally friendly actions. With competing uses for financial resources, such as contributing money to other social issues, it can be difficult to decide which cause is worthy of financial support from the group. Many of the religious groups supported initiatives to reach out to the homeless in their

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<sup>21</sup> Personal Communication; 11/07/04

community and also to support foreign missions dealing with hunger and poverty, but did not support any environmental initiatives. There are simply not enough financial resources to support social programs and earth stewardship activities, and often stewardship of the earth is a lower priority than other concerns such as poverty, health, and famine. Many of the leaders with whom we spoke indicated that they would like to do more concerning earth stewardship, but have too many other commitments and too few resources to make it a priority.

Cost was also mentioned as an important factor when discussing energy efficient initiatives during building renovations. The perception of cost and short-term versus long-term benefits plays an important role in the decisions of religious institutions when they are considering renovations or updating the building's energy needs. Reverend Michael Caldwell of the Lake Region Parish in Barton, VT, experienced resistance from the congregation to the idea of using passive solar gain for heating in the church; he explained that members rejected the idea because of prejudice against cost.<sup>22</sup> It is often difficult to justify the larger financial expenditure that will be repaid through long-term benefits when these groups often have small budgets that are dedicated to multiple needs.

Many religious leaders indicated that they deemed it too political to bring up environmental issues or promote stewardship to their congregations. With the frequent occurrence of conflicting views among members, many leaders thought it was too divisive to raise controversial issues such as environmental concerns. The political implications of supporting a position for or against the environment prevent many religious leaders from discussing the topic. For instance, Reverend Linda Kay Stone of the First Congregational Church of Morrisville recounted her congregation's experience

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<sup>22</sup> Personal Communication; 10/29/04

with an “extreme environmentalist” who alienated other members of the congregation by being both too radical and hypercritical to effectively promote stewardship.<sup>23</sup>

Another challenge is the tendency toward a greater focus on personal morals and salvation than on social morals such as stewardship. While this sentiment was expressed in a few congregations including Baptist and nondenominational organizations, it was particularly strong in Roman Catholic congregations, predominately by Father Danielson of St. John the Baptist Parish in Rutland who expressed with zeal the conviction that congregants did and should focus on their personal morality and “issues of their faith.”<sup>24</sup> Other religious leaders also commented that it was often difficult for members to look beyond their own personal life and apply religious messages to larger overarching social issues. Moreover, a few religious leaders including Rev. Jim Llewellyn of Danville Congregational Church and Pastor David Wood of United Church of Lincoln expressed the theory that concentration on the afterlife and a belief that divine intervention will ultimately destroy the Earth devalues and inhibits congregations from being mindful about the impact of present-day actions upon the environment.<sup>25</sup> This sentiment echoes the criticisms that Lynn White, Jr. expressed in his essay, as discussed in the introduction. Additionally, the belief that God is in control of everything, including the weather, often impedes stewardship because it can be difficult to make the connection between human action and environmental problems such as global climate change.

A focus on personal morality alone can often result in an apathy toward environmental issues that is present in some communities. It can be challenging to foster a care for Creation ethic when members are not willing to make the connection between

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<sup>23</sup> Personal Communication; 11/08/04

<sup>24</sup> Personal Communication; 10/25/04

<sup>25</sup> Personal Communications; 11/04/04



faith and the natural world. Apathy is often present in communities with a large proportion of elderly members, since they are often faced with the immediate issues of health and death rather than care for Creation.

Even if members do acknowledge the importance of stewardship, however, the additional problem of applying these beliefs to their own individual lives and everyday actions represents another obstacle. A lack of connection exists between beliefs and actions, meaning that even if someone believes that stewardship is an important tenant of their faith, they may not live their life according to this belief.

Lack of resources and knowledge about possible involvement in stewardship activities was a trend that we noticed when speaking with people. Reverend Steward Pierson of All Saint's Episcopal Church of South Burlington expressed frustration that the church simply does not know what the next step for the congregation is for becoming more involved in stewardship activities beyond educating themselves about environmental concerns.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, some religious leaders were unaware of opportunities for energy efficiency, such as the use of compact fluorescent light bulbs, while others were conflicted over what actions were truly more environmentally conscious, such as using paper or plastic bags and washing dishware versus using disposable paper plates.

Since we believe that most of the obstacles cited by the congregations we interviewed can be addressed through education, we developed resource kits to send out and have available on our website. We tried to directly speak to each of the major obstacles in what we produced, namely cost, inadequate access to information, apathy, and lack of connection between belief and action, and competing concerns.

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<sup>26</sup> Personal Communication; 10/28/04

In response to the concerns of cost and the lack of resources, we developed a handout specifically tailored to the members of the congregation who make financial decisions about the building and grounds. We felt that if they had access to information about the amount of money they could save by investing in energy efficient systems, they would be more inclined to do so. We found a few resources particularly helpful in disseminating this information but wanted to create our own handout as well. (Appendix E).

While some people expressed frustration over the apathy of congregants, we found that our phone calls and visits did a lot to counteract this problem. Quite often, the level of excitement rose as we proceeded with our interviews, especially in person where various congregants could add on to each other's suggestions. It also seemed that congregations generally had done more than they gave themselves credit for doing. By emphasizing in our interviews that actions such as recycling or using compact fluorescent light bulbs were a good start, religious leaders grew more confident and interested in doing more.

Some congregations, where the main issue was with a lack of connection between belief and action, could be helped by being shown examples of what other congregations of their religion/denomination do that relates to environmental stewardship. For this reason, we created single sheet handouts for each of the major religions and denominations that we interviewed. The layout intentionally highlighted those aspects of each denomination/religion that could help congregations become more involved with environmental stewardship in ways that correspond to the broader goals and procedure generally followed by their religions/denominations.

The challenge of competing priorities for the allocation of time and money can be addressed by showing congregations how their concerns actually often compliment each other. For example, they can save money, eliminate paper waste, and use less storage space if they print documents double-sided. They can also show concern for the poor people living in coastal communities in the world by lowering their contribution to climate change by using cleaner, more efficient sources of energy. Congregations can also foster a sense of community by implementing new projects like using ceramic coffee mugs instead of paper cups, creating a rain garden near the building to filter runoff, or having a special workshop or service about simple living and mitigating the effects of climate change (See Appendix C, Figures 11a and 11b for ideas where activities are taking place).

#### *Vermont Culture and Earth Stewardship: The Importance of Place*

Some of the people we spoke with brought up how earth stewardship not only fit into their religious community but also into the way they perceived Vermont and Vermonters. Reverend Linda Kay Stone from the First Congregational Church pointed out that Vermonters have a tendency to work hard in their own communities, while placing less emphasis on national and international issues.<sup>27</sup> Although this could be construed as an obstacle to addressing climate change because people would be less likely to act upon such a nebulous, global problem, it can also be an asset because Vermonters might generate a lot of enthusiasm around local actions that they can take as communities to combat environmental issues, including over-consumption. As we have seen, there are a few self-reliant individuals that emphasize simple living in their own

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<sup>27</sup> Personal Communication; 11/08/04

lives and model that for others, as illustrated by members of the Jericho Congregational Church who met with us (Appendix D-Jericho). For those individuals or congregations looking to take steps towards energy efficiency and simple living, there are a few important Vermont organizations that can serve as resources. Green Mountain Power can provide energy audits, and Efficiency Vermont provides incentives to increase energy efficiency. Vermont Earth Institute runs a voluntary simplicity class. A Burlington-based organization called the Vermont Interfaith Action Group can serve as another resource for faith-based groups interested in working on environmental initiatives.

## **VI. Future Recommendations**

Religious communities in Vermont have proven to be an important forum for people to discuss and act upon their beliefs surrounding earth stewardship. We see Vermont Interfaith Power and Light facilitating this process by helping congregations network with both religious and secular organizations. It is important for VIPL to continue to develop in this capacity while creating new resources that may be of service to congregations. Hopefully the data collected, GIS maps created, and resource kits produced as part of this project will provide a good starting place for this networking process.

We encourage the members of VIPL to consider our recommendations in their future work. First, VIPL should further investigate ways to network with other Vermont organizations, such as Green Mountain Power, Efficiency Vermont, Vermont Earth Institute, and Vermont Interfaith Action Group. Second, VIPL should investigate ways of providing financial assistance to congregations seeking to invest in energy efficient building initiatives. Third, VIPL should focus on the Northeast Kingdom, where we found earth stewardship involvement to be less frequent (Appendix C, Figure 3). Fourth, for denominations whose social action revolved around issues of health, poverty, and providing social services, it is important for VIPL to emphasize that climate change will exacerbate these social ailments. Lastly, VIPL should focus on engaging Roman Catholic congregations in environmental involvement because these congregations are generally large but have little or no stewardship initiatives.

Overall, we were surprised and impressed to see what environmental initiatives were being taken by religious communities throughout the state. Although VIPL is a

fledgling organization, they will benefit from the strong environmental consciousness that is already prevalent in many religious congregations across Vermont.

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**Appendix A: Phone Interview Contact List (bold denotes in-depth interview)**

Addison

**Denomination: American Baptist/United Methodist**

**Date of Interview: 10/26/04**

**Rev. David Wood**

**United Church of Lincoln**

**23 Quaker Street**

**Lincoln, VT 05443**

**453-4280**

Denomination: Non-denominational liberal Jewish Organization

Date of Interview: 11/09/04

Rabbi Ira Schiffer

Addison County Havurah Center

56 North Pleasant Street

Middlebury, VT 05753

802-443-5762 (Home)

Denomination: United Church of Christ (Congregational)

Date of Interview: 10/25/04

Rev. Gary Lewis

Vergennes Congregational Church

30 South Water Street

Vergennes, VT 05491

877-2435

Denomination: Episcopal

Date of Interview: 10/26/04

Rev. Molly Bidwell

The Jerusalem Gathering Church

196 Jerusalem Road

Bristol, VT 05443

453-5537 (Home)

Denomination: Episcopal

Date of Interview: 11/10/04

Geoffrey T. Robbins

PO Box 233

3 Main St

Middlebury, VT 05753

802 388 7200



Denomination: United Methodist Church / UCC

Date of Interview: 10/25/04

Rev. Charles Graham

Bristol Federated Church

37 North Street

Bristol, VT 05443

453-2321 (Home)

Denomination: Unitarian Universalist

Date of Interview: 11/9/04-email

Rev. Johanna Nichols

Champlain Valley Unitarian Society

P.O. Box 857

Middlebury, VT 05753

388-8080

Denomination: Friends

Date of Interview: 10/28/04

Cheryl Mitchell

Friends Meeting House

164 Mitchell Drive

Vergennes, VT 05491

545-2278 (Home)

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Date of Interview: 10/24/04

Rev. Pierre LaVallee

St. Ambrose Parish

11 School Street

Bristol, VT 05443

453-2488

Denomination: Victory Baptist

Date of Interview: 10/20/04

Rev. Tim Taylor

Victory Baptist Church

P.O. Box 160

Vergennes, VT 05491

877-3393

Bennington

Denomination: American Baptist

Date of Interview: 10/23/04

Bennington First Baptist

Rev. George Hardy

Interviewed: Norma Drosky

601 Main St.

Bennington, VT 05201

442-2105

Denomination: Jewish – no affiliation

Date of Interview: 11/4/04

Rabbi Robert Freedman

Israel Congregation

PO Box 1050

Manchester VT 05255

802 362 4578

shalom@sover.net

Denomination: Nondenominational

Date of Interview: 11/8/04

Rev. Linda Lebert

Harvest Christian Ministries

945 Main St

Bennington, VT 05201

802 447 0869

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Date of Interview: 10/22/04

John the Baptist Church

Rev. Edward Howard

PO Box 219

North Bennington, VT 05257

802 447 7504

Denomination: UCC

Date of Interview: 10/26/04

First Congregational Church

Rev. Steven Berry

PO Box 588

Manchester, VT 05354

362-2709

[fstcongo@adelphia.net](mailto:fstcongo@adelphia.net)

Denomination: United Methodist  
Date of Interview: 10/26/04  
Rev. David Bort  
Sandgate Methodist  
1894 Sunderland Hill Arlington, VT 05250  
802 375 2254  
[djsaltbox1797@webtv.net](mailto:djsaltbox1797@webtv.net)

Denomination: Episcopal  
Date of Interview: 10/27/04  
St Peter's Episcopal Church  
Robert Miner  
PO Box 799  
Bennington VT 05201  
802 442 2559  
Interviewed: Donna Marony, temporary Secretary  
Judy Pembroke

Denomination: Jewish - Reconstructionist  
Date of Interview: 11/3/04  
Rabbi Howard Cohen  
Congregation Beth El  
107 Adams St.  
Bennington, VT 05201

Caledonia

Denomination: UMC  
Date of Interview: 10/29/04  
Barbara Dwyer  
Grace United Methodist Church  
801 626 5267

Denomination: Baptist  
Date of Interview: 11/4/04  
Pastor Bacon  
Union Baptist Church  
932 US Route 5  
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819  
748-5639

Denomination: Roman Catholic  
Date of Interview: 10/29/04  
Father Patrick Forman  
49 Winter Street  
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819  
748-8129

Denomination: UCC  
Date of Interview: 10/28/04  
Jay Sprout  
North Congregational Church  
1325 Main Street  
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819  
748-2603 (church); 663-3043 (home)

Denomination: UCC  
Date of Interview: 11/4/04  
Jim Llewellyn  
Danville Congregational Church,  
87 Hill St.  
Danville, VT 05828  
(802)684-2176

Denomination: Catholic  
Date of Interview: 11/2/04  
Father Steven Nichols  
626-5267

### Chittenden

Denomination: American Baptist  
Date of Interview: 11/01/04  
Reverend David O'Brien  
Burlington First Baptist Church  
81 St. Paul Street  
Burlington, VT 05401  
864-6515  
fbcvt@together.net

Denomination: Baptist (Southern)  
Date of Interview: 11/3/04  
Mike Cunningham  
New Covenant Baptist Church  
1451 Williston Road  
South Burlington, VT 05403  
863-4305

**Denomination: Episcopal**  
**Date of Interview: 10/28/04**  
**Reverend Stewart Pierson**  
**All Saints' Episcopal Church**  
**43 Imperial Drive**  
**South Burlington, VT 05403**  
**862-9750 or 482-5877(Rev. home)**

Denomination: Episcopal  
Date of Interview: 11/01/04  
Reverend Ken Poppe  
Cathedral Church of St. Paul  
2 Cherry Street  
Burlington, VT 05401  
864-0471

Denomination: Episcopal  
Date of Interview: 11/4/04  
Susan deGavre  
St. James Episcopal  
4 St. James Place  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
878-4014

Denomination: Friends  
Date of Interview: 11/16/04  
Helen Head  
65 East Terrace  
South Burlington, VT 05403  
862-2267  
[helen.head@verizon.net](mailto:helen.head@verizon.net)

or: Ruah Swennerfelt  
360 Toad Road  
Charlotte, VT 05445  
425-3377  
[ruah.s@wildmail.com](mailto:ruah.s@wildmail.com)

**Denomination: Independent**  
**Date of Interview: 10/28/04**  
**Reverend Peter Anderson**  
**Jericho Congregational Church**  
**PO Box 1022**  
**Jericho Center, VT 05465**  
**899-4911**  
**[jccpda@adelphia.net](mailto:jccpda@adelphia.net)**

**Denomination: Conservative Judaism**  
**Date of Interview: 11/01/04**  
**Rabbi Joshua Chason**  
**Ohavi Zedek Synagogue**  
**188 North Prospect**  
**Burlington, VT 05401**  
**864-0218**  
**[rabbi@ohavizedek.com](mailto:rabbi@ohavizedek.com)**

**Denomination: Lutheran**  
**Date of Interview: 11/04/04**  
**Roger Barassa (church elder)**  
**Community Lutheran Church**  
**93 Hannah's Place**  
**Colchester, VT 05446**  
**879-9549 (home)**

**Denomination: Roman Catholic**  
**Date of Interview: 11/4/04**  
**Father Roland Rivard**  
**Christ the King Parish**  
**136 Locust Street**  
**Burlington, VT 05401**  
**862-5784**

**Denomination: Roman Catholic**  
**Date of Interview: 11/04/04**  
**Reverend Ronald Benoit**  
**Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish**  
**PO Box 243**  
**Richmond, VT 05477**  
**434-2521**

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Date of Interview: 11/04/04

Reverend Charles Ranges

Holy Family Rectory

4 Prospect Street

Essex Junction, VT 05452

878-5331

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Date of Interview: 11/08/04

Father John Felz

St. Ann Rectory

PO Box 1

Milton, VT 05468

893-2487

Denomination: Free Methodist (NOT UMC)

Date of Interview: 11/08/04

Pastor Roberta Hodge

Free Methodist Church

76 Elmwood Ave.

Burlington, VT 05401

862-2541

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Date of Interview: 11/08/04

Father Francis Holland

St. Marks Rectory

1251 North Avenue

Burlington, VT 05401

864-7686

Denomination: United Church of Christ

Date of Interview: 11/01/04

Reverend Stephen Garvey

First Congregational Church

1 Church Street

Essex Junction, VT 05452

878-5745

fccsessexjct@verizon.net

**Denomination: United Church of Christ**

**Date of Interview: 11/01/04**

**Reverend Barbara Purinton**

**Richmond Congregational Church**

**PO Box 302**

**Richmond, VT 05477**

**434-2053 or 434-5095 (home)**

**Denomination: Methodist**

**Date of Interview: 10/28/04**

**Reverend Gregory Smith**

**Essex United Methodist Church**

**11 Woodlawn Dr.**

**Essex Junction, VT 05452**

**878-5745**

**[essexcenterumc@att.net](mailto:essexcenterumc@att.net)**

**Denomination: United Methodist**

**Date of Interview: 11/1/04**

**Reverend Richard (Dick) Hibbert**

**First United Methodist Church**

**21 Buell Street**

**Burlington, VT 05401**

**862-1151**

**[fumc.bvtv@verizon.net](mailto:fumc.bvtv@verizon.net)**

**Denomination: United Methodist**

**Date of Interview: 11/01/04**

**Reverend David Murphy**

**Shelburne United Methodist Church**

**PO Box 365**

**Shelburne, VT 05482**

**985-3981**

**[SUMC@together.net](mailto:SUMC@together.net)**

**Denomination: Unitarian Universalist**

**Date of Interview: 11/16/04**

**First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington VT**

**Reverend Gary Kowalski**

**862-5630 ex. 24**

**152 Pearl St.**

**Burlington, VT 05401**

**862-5630 ex. 24**

**[office@uusociety.org](mailto:office@uusociety.org)**



**Denomination: Zen Buddhist**

**Date of Interview:** 11/9/04

**Jed Graef**

**Vermont Zen Center**

**14 Thomas Rd.**

**Shelburne, VT 05482**

**985-9746**

Essex

**Denomination: Roman Catholic**

**Date of Interview:** 10/29/04

**Rev. William Morgan**

**St. James Rectory**

**P.O. Box 407**

**Island Pond, VT 05846**

**723-5905**

Franklin

**Denomination: UMC**

**Date of Interview:** 11/4/04

**St. Paul's Church**

**Herman Benjamin**

**11 Church St.**

**St. Albans, VT 05478**

**Denomination: Non-denominational**

**Date of Interview:** 10/30/04

**The Church in Prison, Inc.**

**NW State Correctional Facility**

**Pastor Pete Fiske**

**Denomination: Roman Catholic**

**Date of Interview:** 10/29/04

**St. Anthony Parish**

**Bernard Bechard**

**Denomination: Episcopal**

**Date of Interview:** 9/29/04

**Holy Trinity Episcopal Church**

**Reid Farrell**

**PO Box 273**

**Swanton, VT 05488**

Grand Isle

Denomination: United Methodist  
Date of Interview: 11/09/04  
Rev. Anne Bachman  
Champlain Island Parish (Grand Isle)  
P.O. Box 107  
North Hero, VT 05474  
802-372-6638

Lamoille

Denomination: other (Conservative Grace Brethren Int'l)  
Date of Interview: 11/4/04 (Judith)  
Pastor Ethan Kallberg  
Advent Christian Church  
36 Maple St.  
Morrisville, VT 05661  
(802) 888-4633

Denomination: United Methodist  
Date of Interview: 11/3/04  
Rev. Lise Boulerice  
Elmore United Methodist  
P.O. Box 181  
Lake Elmore, VT 05657  
(802) 888-3247

Denomination: Pentecostal  
Date of Interview: 11/3/04  
Rev. Mike Collier  
Cornerstone Foursquare Church  
P.O. Box 578  
Morrisville, VT 05661  
(802) 888-5683

Denomination: UCC  
Date of Interview: 11/8/04  
Linda Kay Stone (interim minister)  
First Congregational Church  
P.O. Box 475  
Morrisville, VT 05661  
(802) 888-2225

Rutland

Denomination: American Baptist

Date of Interview: 10/29/04

Glen Bachelder

(interim pastor)

Poultney United Baptist Church

P.O Box 601

East Poultney, VT 05741

287-5577 (church) 287-5811 (rectory)

Denomination: Bahai

Date of Interview: 11/8/04

Ronald Headlam

20 Jackson Ave

Rutland, VT 05701

747-3448

Denomination: Episcopalian

Date of Interview: 10/28/04

Father Gordon Bardos

Denomination: Jewish

Rutland Jewish Center

Rabbi Jerry Seidler

Denomination: Alliance Fellowship

Date of Interview: 11/4/04

Pastor Charles Smith

Alliance Community Fellowship

1 Scale Ave Ste 101

Rutland, VT 05701

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Date of Interview: 10/25/04

Rev. Charles Danielson

St. John the Baptist Parish

P.O. Box 128

Castleton, VT 05735

468-5706 (church)

Denomination: Roman Catholic  
Date of Interview: 10/28/04  
Father Madison  
Christ the King Parish  
66 south main street  
Rutland, VT 05701  
773-6820

Denomination: Roman Catholic  
Date of Interview: 10/28/04  
Father Joseph Romano  
St. Dominic Parish  
45 South St.  
Proctor, VT 05765  
802 459 2221

Denomination: UCC  
Date of Interview: 10/26/04  
Rev. Richard White  
Brandon Congregation Church  
P.O. Box 97  
Brandon, VT 05733  
247-6058

Denomination: UMC  
Date of Interview: 11/4/04  
Rev. Edward Hackett  
71 Williams St.  
Rutland, VT 05701

Orange

Denomination: UMC  
Date of Interview: 11/8/04  
Grace United Methodist Church  
Michelle Sabin  
P.O. Box 726  
Bradford, VT 05033

Denomination: UCC  
Date of Interview: 11/2/04  
United Church of Strafford  
Mary Luckey  
PO Box 189  
South Strafford, VT 05070

Denomination: UCC

Date of Interview: 10/29/04

Phyllis Roberts

Bethany Church

30 N. Main St.

Randolph, VT 05060

Denomination: UCC and UMC

Date of Interview: 10/29/04

Michael Caldwell

Lake Region Parish – Barton Church

PO Box 306

Barton, VT 05822

Orleans

Denomination: Non-denominational

Date of Interview: 10/29/04

Michael Caldwell

Lake Region Parish – Glover community church and First Congregational Church of West Glover

PO Box 306

Barton, VT 05822

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Date of Interview: 10/30/04

Father Yvon Royer

St. Mary's, St. Edwards, St. Benedicts

191 Claremont Terrace

Newport, VT 05855

Denomination: Catholic (cloister)

Date of Interview: 10/29/04

Monastery of the Immaculate Heart

Sister Anne Mari Maunier (nun, not the Mother Superior)

403 VT Route 100

Westfield, VT 05874

Denomination: Assembly of God

Date of Interview: 11/4/04

Solid Rock Assembly of God

Rev. Larry Czelusta

PO Box 318

Barton, VT 05822

Washington

Denomination: American Baptist

Date of Interview: 11/3/04

Rev. David Asel

First Baptist Church- Montpelier

3 St. Paul Street

Montpelier, VT 05602

233-7602

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Date of Interview: 10/30/04

Rev. Thomas Mosher

St. Augustine Rectory

16 Barre Street

Montpelier, VT 05602

223-5285

Denomination: Unitarian Universalist

Date of Interview: 10/30/04

Rev. Marjorie Rebmann

Unitarian Church of Montpelier

130 Main Street

Montpelier, VT 05602

223-7861

Denomination: Episcopalian

Date of Interview: 11/11/04

Rev. David Hall

Christ Episcopal Church

64 State Street

Montpelier, VT 05602

802-223-3631

Denomination: UCC (Congregational)

Date of Interview: 10/30/04

Rev. Susan Cooke Kittredge

Old Meeting House- East Montpelier

611 Center Road

Middlesex, VT 05602

Denomination: UCC (Congregational)

Date of Interview: 11/1/04

Rev. Dereen Vanderlinde-Avernathy

Berlin First Congregational Church

RD 4 Box 2250

Montpelier, VT 05602

476-4084 (Home)

Denomination: United Methodist

Date of Interview: 11/1/04

Rev. Ralph Howe

Hedding United Methodist Church

21 French Street

Barre, VT 05641

476-7904

Denomination: United Methodist

Date of Interview: 11/3/04

Rev. Tim Atwater

Plainfield United Methodist Church

P.O. Box 277

Plainfield, VT 05667

454-8343

Denomination: Presbyterian

Date of Interview: 11/1/04

Rev. Elizabeth Kirkpatrick

Graniteville Presbyterian Church

1 John Street

Barre, VT 05641

479-0796 (home)

Denomination: Other

Date of Interview: 11/15/04

Pastor Longe

Hunger Mountain Christian Assembly

Rt 100

Waterbury, VT 05676

802 244 5921

Windham

Denomination: American Baptist

Date of Interview: 11/7/04

Rev Charles Friedman

First Baptist Church

9 Church St

Bellow Falls, VT 05101

802 463 3220

[chuckfr@vermontel.net](mailto:chuckfr@vermontel.net)

Denomination: Catholic

Date of Interview: 11/12/04

Rev. Charles Wallen Date of Interview:

Our Lady Fatima Rectory

P.O. Box 188

Wilmington, VT 05363

(802) 464-7329

Denomination: Congregational (Yoked church)

Date of Interview: 11/12/04

Sherry Cobb (clerk)

Wardsboro Church

P.O. Box 58

South Newfane, VT 05351

Peter Carlson (minister, certified through UCC)

(802) 896-6638

Denomination: UCC

Date of Interview: 11/5/04 (Judith)

Rev. Kathryn Hult

Bellows Falls United Church

P.O. Box 310

Bellows Falls, VT 05101

(802) 463-4323 Tues. – Fri.

Denomination: UCC

Date of Interview: 11/12/04

Fred Edmonds

Centre Congregational Church

193 Main St.

Brattleboro, VT 05301



Windsor

Denomination: United Methodist  
Date of Interview: 11/3/04  
Rev. James Knapp  
St. James United Methodist Church  
PO Box 113  
Proctorsville, VT 05153  
802 226 7964  
JCjohn@yahoo.com

Denomination: United Methodist  
Date of Interview: 11/3/04  
Rev. William Scherwerts  
Springfield United Methodist  
10 Valley St.  
Springfield, VT 05156  
802 885 3456  
chd@vermontel.net

Denomination: Episcopal  
Date of Interview: 11/3/04  
Rev. Sarah Horton  
St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church  
PO Box 306  
Norwich, VT 05055  
802 649 1433

Denomination: Episcopal  
Date of Interview: 11/3/04  
Rev Nancy Vogel  
St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
749 Hartford Ave  
White River Jct., VT 05001  
802 295 5451

Denomination: Nondenominational  
Date of Interview: 11/8/04  
Rev Nelson Hutt  
Oak Chapel  
Box 127  
Bridgewater, VT 05034  
802 672 3506

Denomination: Roman Catholic

Date of Interview: 10/26/04

St. Mary's Rectory

40 Summer St.

Springfield, VT 05165

stmarys@vermontel.com

Spoke with: Kate Bachinski, Church Secretary

Denomination: UCC- United Church of Christ

Date of Interview: 11/3/04

Rev. Constance Moser

Ascutney Union Church

PO Box 345

Ascutney, VT 05030

802 674 2484

Denomination: UCC

Date of Interview: 11/3/04

Rev. Donald Harpster

United Church of Ludlow

46 Pleasant St.

Ludlow, VT 05149

802 824 6453

Denomination: UCC

Date of Interview: 11/4/04

Rev. Dougals Moore

(spoke with female pastor)

Norwich Congregational Church

PO Box 236

Norwich, VT 05055

802 649 1433

Denomination: UCC

Date of Interview: 11/15/04

Greater Hartford UCC

Janice Chilek

PO Box 265

Hartford, VT 05047

Denomination: Unitarian Universalist

Date of Interview: 10/27/04

Rev. Beverly Boke

First Universalist Society

PO Box Hartford Four, VT 05049

802 436 2593 (home 263-5487)

[boke@tds.net](mailto:boke@tds.net)

Denomination: American Baptist

Date of Interview: 11/3/04

Rev. Thomas Hiltzley

Springfield-Calvary Baptist Church

156 Main St.

Springfield, VT 05156

802 885 2349

Denomination: Zen Buddhist

Date of Interview: 11/9/04

Sister True Virtue

Green Mountain Dharma Center (for nuns)

PO Box 182

Ayres Lane

Hartland-Four Corners, VT 05049

802 436 1102

## **Appendix B: Sample Preliminary Interview Form**

**County:**

**Denomination:**

**Contact Information:**

**Date of Interview:**

Size of Congregation:

Religious Denomination:

Do you have any environmentally related services?

Are any of these services focused on issues of global climate change?

Do you have an environmental action or social group that participates in environmental activism in your local community?

Do you have any child or adult educational programs that incorporate issues of global climate change?

Are you affiliated with a regional or national association that deals with environmental and religious issues?

Do you take measures at your congregation to promote environmental consciousness?

Have you had any obstacles in trying to implement any environmental activities?

Do you have any future environmental projects planned?

**Scale of Involvement Level:**

Notes:

**Figure 1: Towns Where In-Depth Interviews Were Completed**

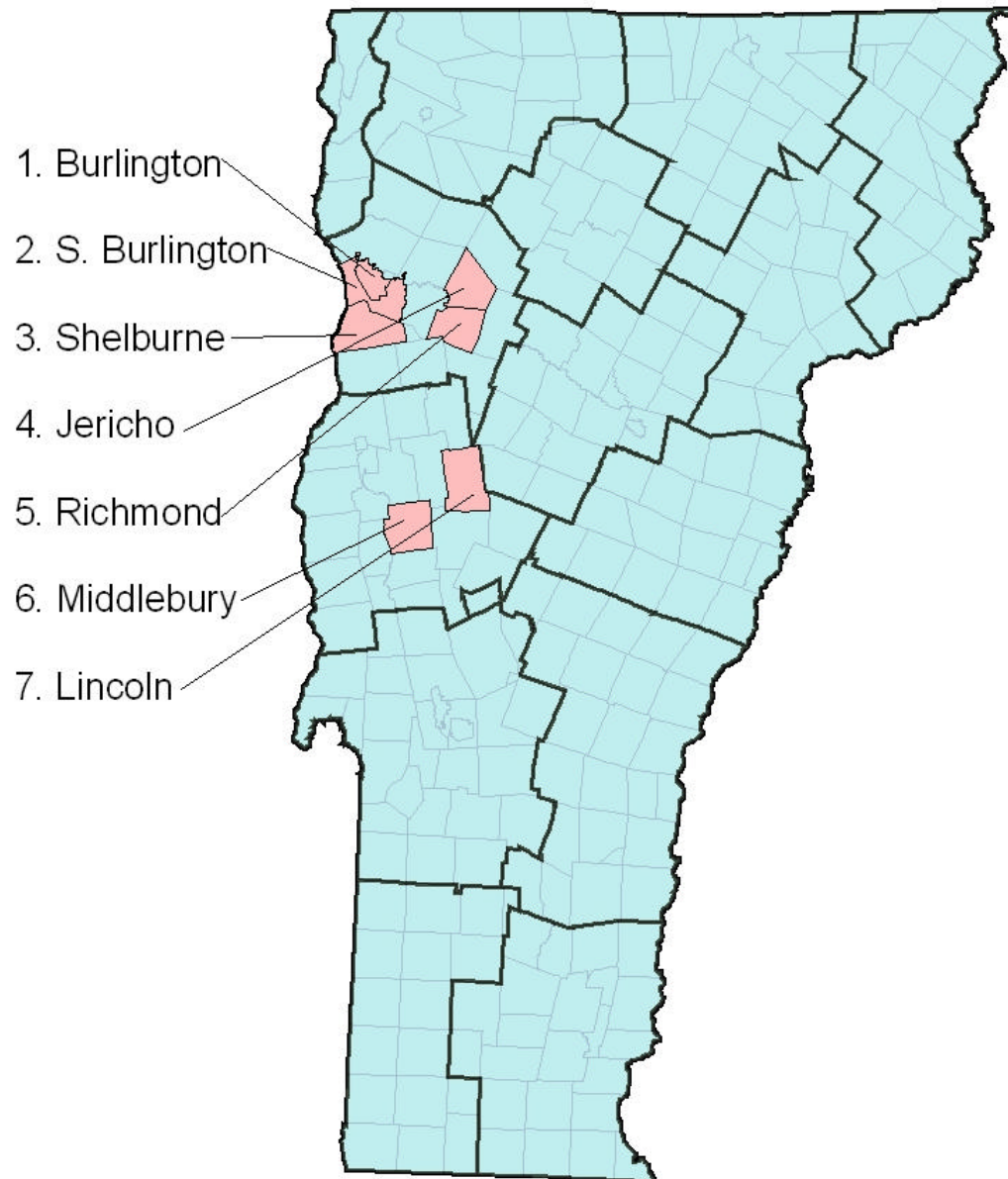


Figure 2: Population of Counties and Number of Religious Establishments Surveyed

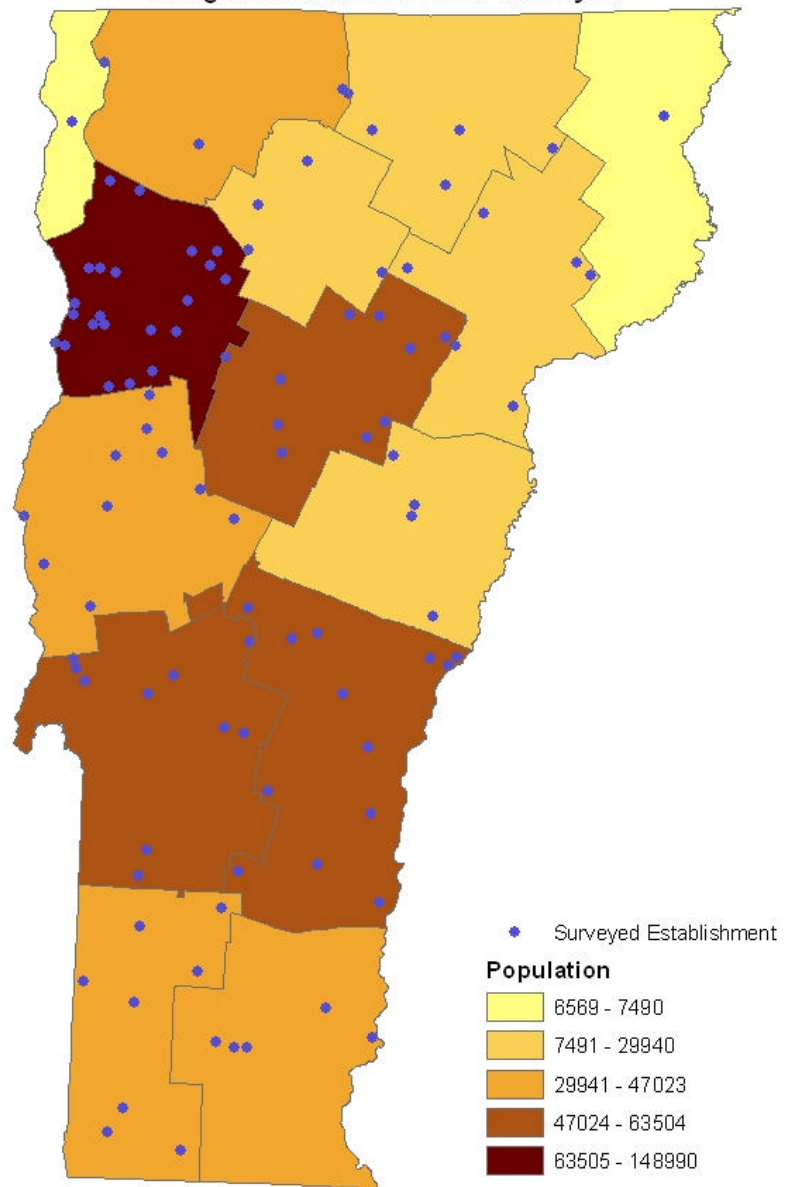


Figure 3: Average Scale of Involvement Score Per County

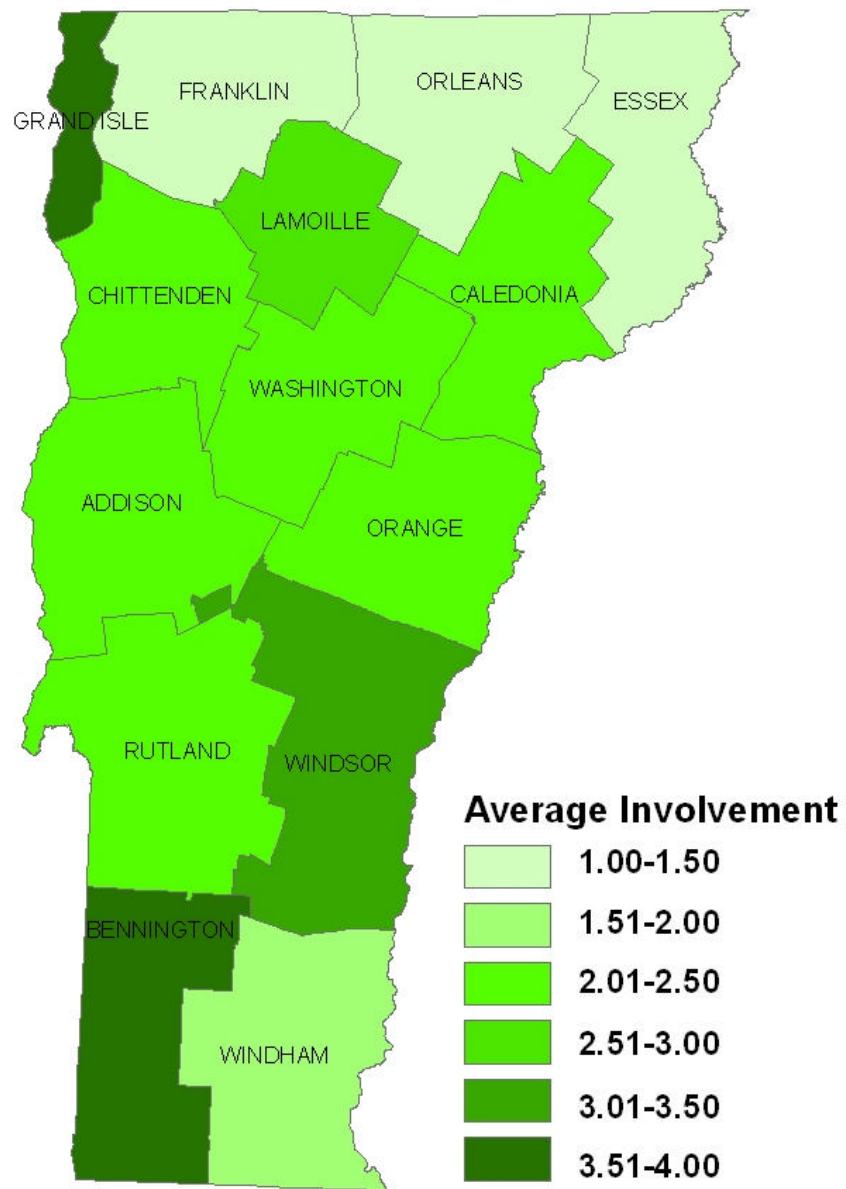


Figure 4: Average Weighted Involvement Score Per County

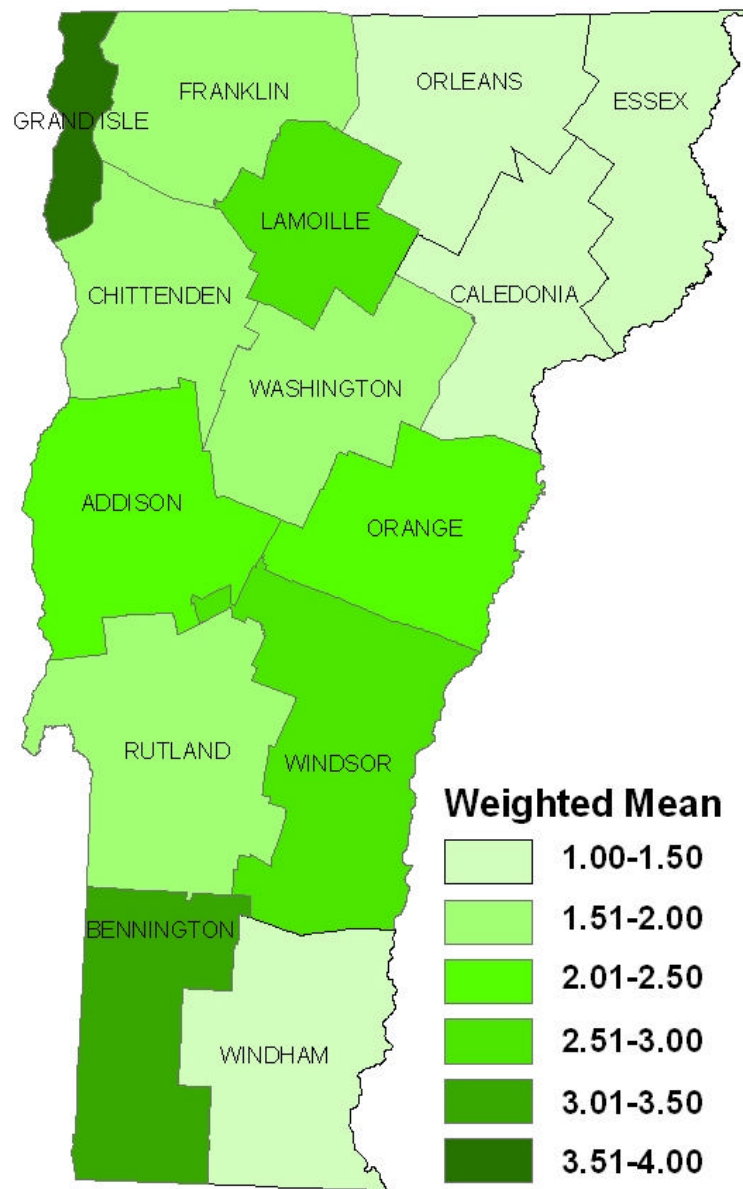




Figure 5: Weighted Mean Vs. Non-Weighted Mean Involvement Score Per County

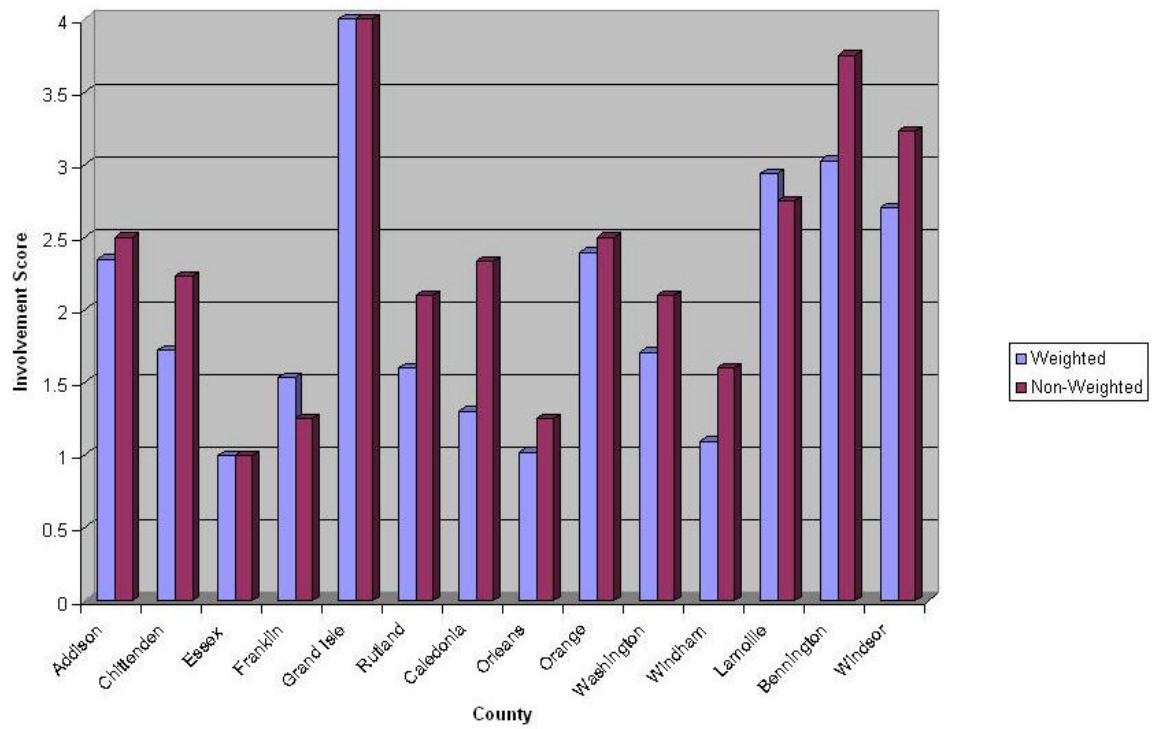


Figure 6: Weighted Mean Vs. Non-Weighted Mean Involvement Score Per Denomination

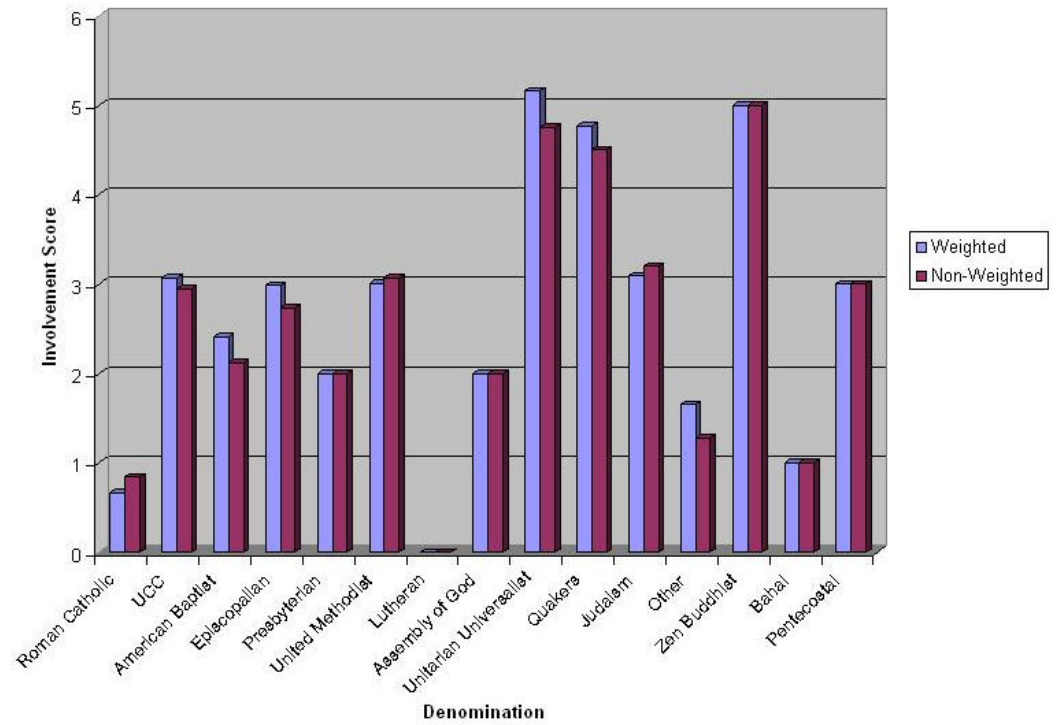


Figure 7: Percentage of Total "Yes" Responses to Preliminary Survey Questions

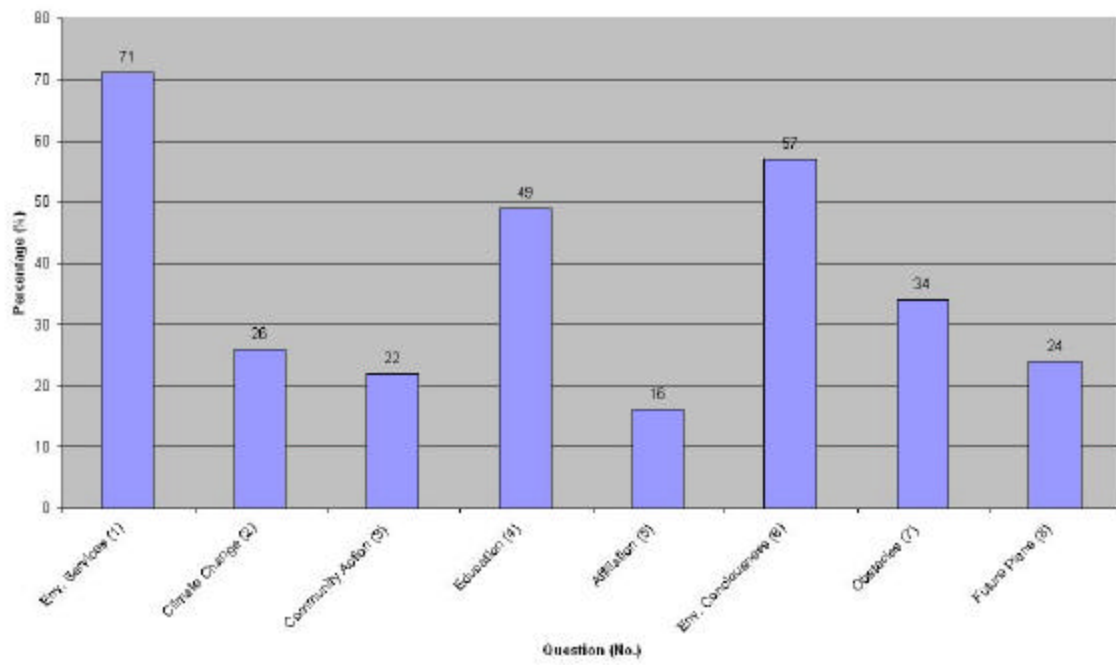
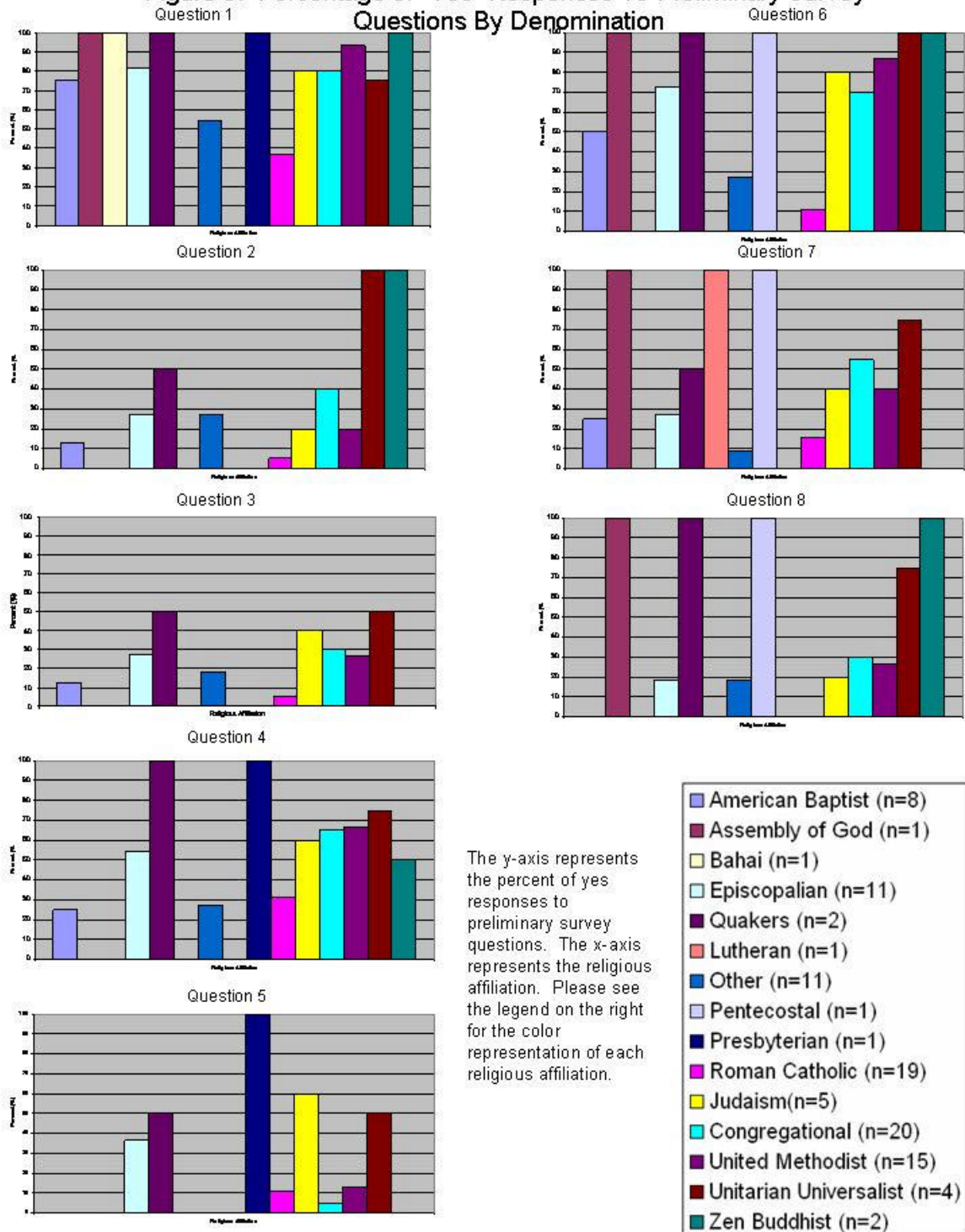


Figure 8: Percentage of “Yes” Responses To Preliminary Survey



**Figure 9: Percent of Total Involvement in Eight Environmentally Conscious Activities for All Religious Institutions Surveyed**

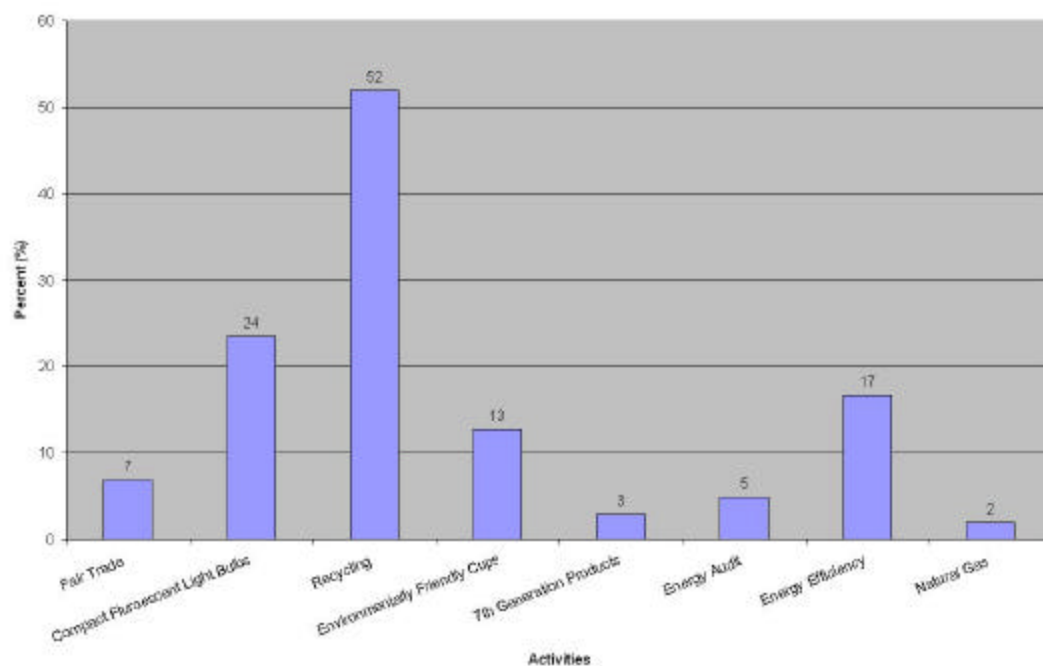
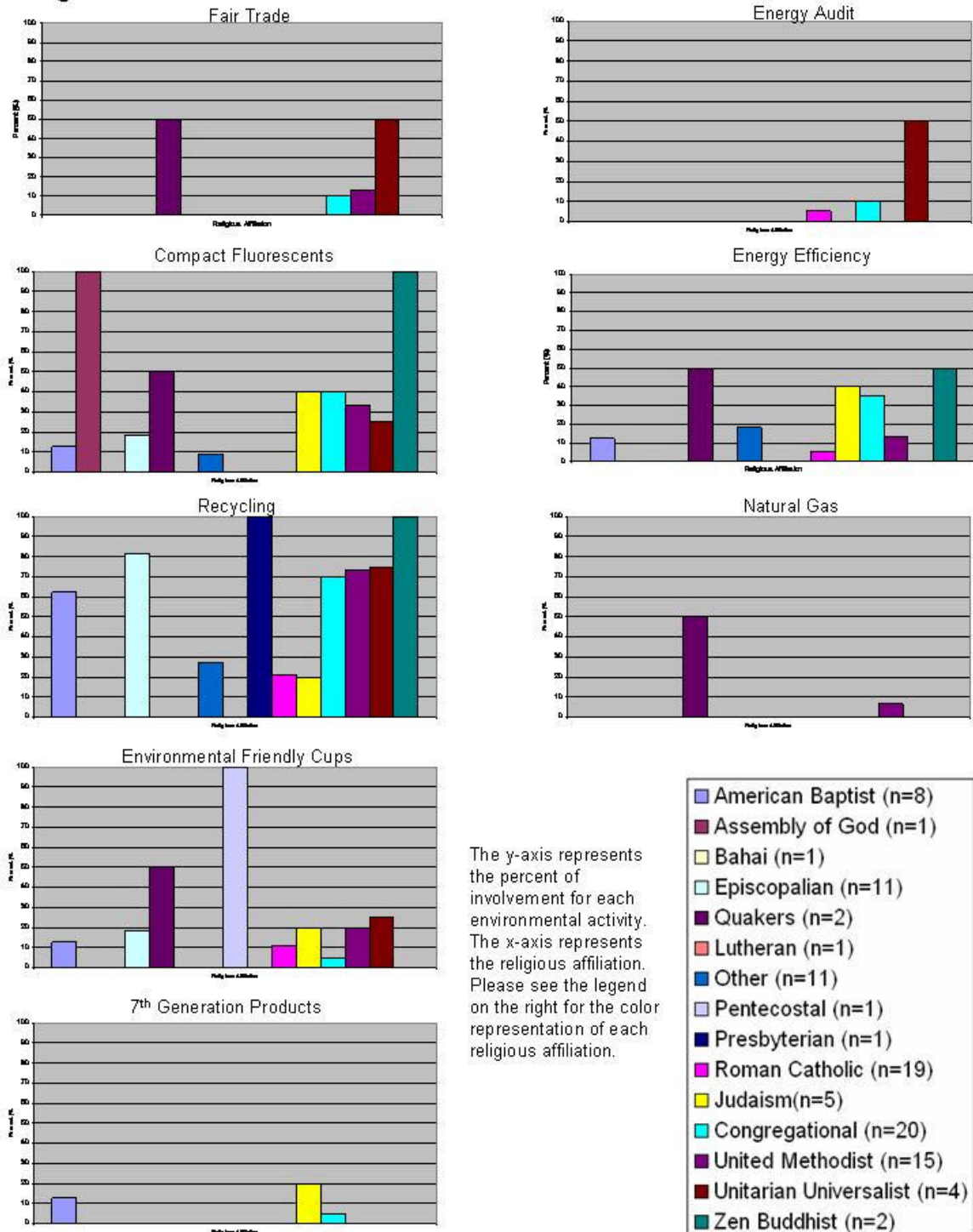


Figure 10: Percent of Involvement In Environmental Activities Per Denomination



The y-axis represents the percent of involvement for each environmental activity. The x-axis represents the religious affiliation. Please see the legend on the right for the color representation of each religious affiliation.

Figure 11a: Environmental Activities Within Religious Establishments Per Town

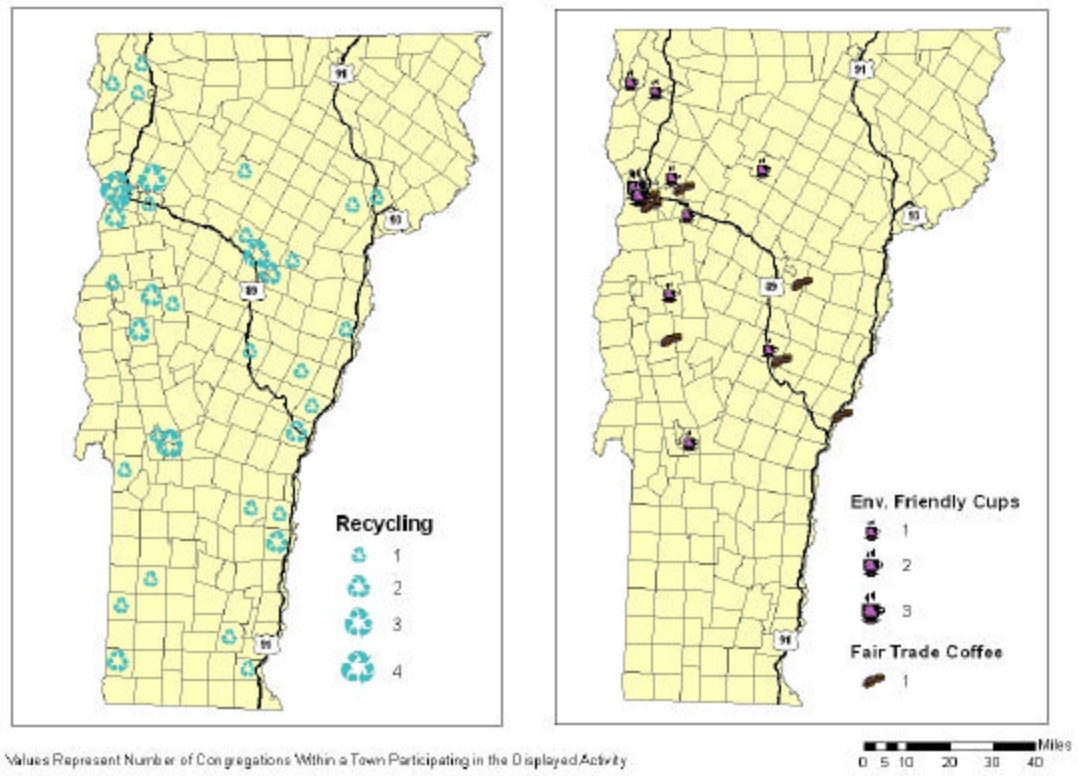
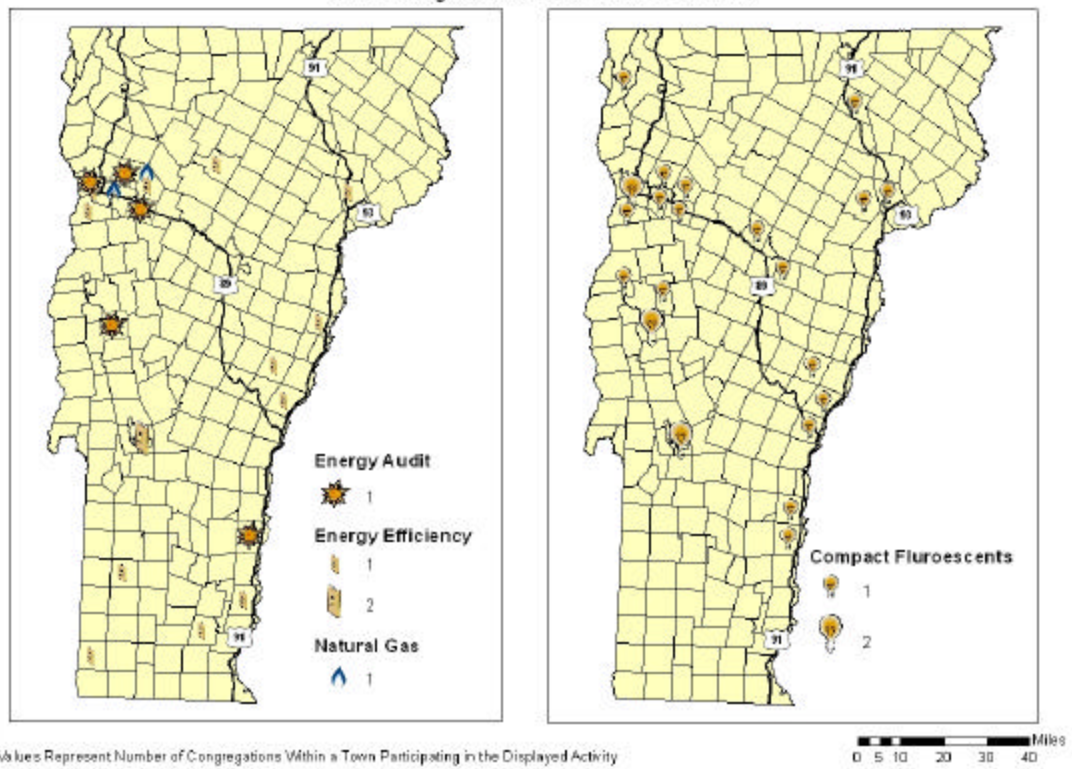




Figure 11b: Environmental Activities Targeting Global Climate Change  
Within Religious Establishments Per Town





## **Appendix D: In-depth Interviews with Religious Leaders and/or Congregants**

*November 4, 2004  
United Church of Lincoln  
Pastor David Wood*

Pastor David Wood brings up issues of environmental stewardship frequently in his congregation. While there are specific services in the Spring devoted to this topic, it comes up throughout the year. Pastor Wood uses the end of the first Creation story from Genesis as the scriptural foundation to his discussions on stewardship, as well as Psalm 24, the Lord's prayer from Matthew, chapter 6, and the Revelations. Pastor Wood finds that people in this church are very receptive to the message (implying that other churches, however, are not responsive to such discussions of stewardship). Two rationales Pastor Wood suggested for perhaps why there is such a receptive audience in this particular geographic local is the overt branding of Vermont as a "green" place, thus attracting new Vermonters of this mindset, and acid rain from the Midwest's pollution which plagues the Vermont ecosystems; because these two situations are publicly acknowledged and universally affecting, it merges those who might not necessarily call themselves environmentalists with Earth advocates. Furthermore, congregants might be receptive because of the ongoing controversy if not publicity about statewide wind turbine implementation; this dialogue over renewable energy has been going on for nearly 23 years and so it has pervaded the consciousness or at least become tolerable to people in the general area.

In discussing the motivation for incorporating an environmental consciousness in one's faith, Pastor Wood strongly emphasized the impact that the 1973 oil embargo has had upon his life (and that of many of his congregants). He feels that watching the

widespread efforts that occurred to wean Americans from our dependence on oil, our accomplishment of those technologies, and subsequent ignorance and return to old ways once the crisis subsided profoundly affected him and motivated him to continue such efforts. He mused if we need another crisis now of a similar manner to get people to remember that more efficient and ecologically-conscious energy-producing methods are out there. Therefore, while he finds an implicit connection to the Earth and stewardship through the text and values of his American Baptist faith, the explicit frustration from the 1973 oil crisis alone powered his drive to expand personal expressions of stewardship. One expression that he is currently undertaking is looking into putting in wind power for the Old Hotel that he owns in town; this might be possible whereas options such as solar power remain too costly. For those that live in the area, Pastor Wood wants to connect the idea of stewardship or environmentalism to their religion (or emphasize the pre-existing relationship) because he feels that it is a way to send the message to people who might otherwise shy away from “environmentalism” because of the political stigmas associated to it; while they might not deem themselves environmentalists, by being proud and active Christians they are already doing things, living the life of the steward, and they just may not perceive this as an “environmental” act. Thus, Pastor Wood expressed a need to reframe the term in language. This theme was later discussed by his story about water-witching of a local farmer who spoke of ‘keeping the water clean and separate so that nobody dirtied his water’ who in a sense was discussing the very complex environmental issue of groundwater contamination and depletion but wouldn’t consider himself an environmentalist but just someone concerned over water rights because it affects his livelihood. Similarly, then, Pastor Wood acknowledged a need to reach out to people in

similar language to reinforce this ethic and help make connections to stewardship that they might not otherwise realize—they're just living their lives.

The topic of involvement of the national affiliate of the American Baptists Church (ABC) versus the local involvement of ABC parishes was then brought up. Pastor Wood recognized that there does seem to be a strong lack of connection between the environmental consciousness the national Church makes and that of the local level. There is a rather strong leadership from the greater Church in constructing a specific Stewardship Sunday sermon in the lectionary and policy statements that emphasize the importance of action towards ecological sustainability from the ABC churches nationwide (in terms of theological connection). However, problems occur, he thought because Pastors and congregants alike either do not go looking for such policy statements, and thus don't know what the Church compels, or, he insinuated, local church leaders simply and irresponsibly ignore the issue of stewardship because they have other issues on their agendas. He commended the ABC Church for its propagation of environmentalism through missionary work in that their work transcends "saving souls" to teaching skills of water preservation, waste treatment isolation, etc. by again, Baptists who might not consider themselves environmentalists but rather stewards who know how to do certain skills from their lives as farmers and are spreading that knowledge and ethic around the world.

Pastor Wood expressed a personal obligation for his congregation or Church to be conscious of its ecological impact because he felt that "the facility should be a 'witness' just as people are called upon to be 'witnesses'." He mentioned a variety of actions and events the Church has sponsored such as Green-Up cleanups, pulling of the invasive

Bamboo or “knot weed” which is threatening native species along the river, recycling, the use of Seventh Generation products, and various outdoor “connection to the land” activities (e.g. Congregants’ hikes, cross-country skiing, and camping). One significant event that this church helped to establish was an interfaith forum that began in the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the need to increase tolerance across faiths. Through this forum, it was recognized that one thing that brought the represented faiths of Tibetan Buddhism, Wicca, Native American faiths, Islam, and many branches of the Christian faith together was an obligation to sustain the environment. Out of this, Pastor Wood described, was an interfaith and intergenerational tree planting which presented the variety of faith’s beliefs and sense of obligation to the Earth; while he jovially conceded a slight hesitancy or tension from most participants, generated from both aspects of the ceremony and the presence of other faiths (some of his congregants felt that actions such as dancing around the tree verged very closely to Earth-worshipping), Pastor Wood felt that the action reaffirmed each faith’s connection to the Earth and ultimately brought the community closer by finding common ground within the faiths.

In terms of leadership to urge stewardship among his congregation, Pastor Wood felt that it was both “top-down” and “bottom-up.” He acknowledged that his interest and enthusiasm is definitely a strong pull being that he’s worked at the church now for several decades. However, because of the Congregationalist structure of their church (not hierarchical as some other denominations), Pastor Wood expressed that congregants were equally likely to prod him as well as other congregants to be stewards of the Earth, reminding of the religious motivations and suggesting actions. This statement then led into an analysis of any possibly visible generational breakdowns

among congregants in terms of environmental consciousness. While he felt that each generation had something to offer (the older congregants being highly dedicated, the youth getting very enthused and quick to leap in any direction sent), he felt that it was his generation of middle-aged congregants who seemed the most individually motivated and passionate about stewardship and environmental consciousness; perhaps, like him, he thought, they are compelled by the experiences of the 1970s when they were all starting to drive and financially-independent. Pastor Wood also emphasize again, that part of the issue of being a pastor is recognizing the different strengths that these subgroups have and the language that they use in order to relate stewardship to them on a specialized, more comprehensible manner that would motivate them. Pastor Wood suggested that there were a couple of obstacles in having a more environmentally-conscious congregation. First, he expressed, the difficulty of reaching beyond people liking the sermons he gives, to actually living it— parishioners self-modifying their lives in a variety of manners to reduce their impact on the Earth. Second, Pastor Wood expressed the economic obstacle of wanting to implement a variety of structural measures (i.e. get new light fixtures that could accommodate efficient lightbulbs, increase energy efficiency in the heating system, etc.) on a very limited budget; thus, he expressed a genuine interest in modifications that the Church could do to become more energy efficient within their financial scheme (cost-effective measures and/or outlets they could utilize such as grants to gain financial support for sustainable actions).

*November 7, 2004*  
*Jericho Congregational Church*  
*Reverend Peter Anderson*

Setting: Trevor, Lauren, and Judith attended Sunday morning service and proceeded to the fellowship hall afterwards where we met with the reverend and a group of congregants who he thought would have especially pertinent things to say. These people included:

1. Debbie Moltrop
2. Gary Davis
3. Barry & Kelly King
4. Ann Gnagey & Tom and Todd Baribault
5. Nancy Carey

How each of these people spoke about how their faith impacted their way of life and attitude towards the environment:

**Debbie Moltrop** owned a dairy farm in Richmond that has been in her family for four generations. Now she has seasonal jersey cows that she milks during the grass season. She installed a fence along her property where the Huntington River runs through it with the encouragement of the Winooski Watershed District. Although the project has been very inconvenient for her because it has meant that she has had to spend a lot of time hauling water for the cows in the winter, she has remained committed to it because of a desire to pay attention to the wishes of other people and the government. (She said that it might become against the law to have cows in the river, even though she did not personally see this as a big problem in her own experience.) She believes that people and relationships are eternal. Although she feels it is important to be stewards of God's land, she thinks it is *important to worship the creator, not creation*.

**Gary Davis** also owned a dairy farm. He tries to keep the jerseys in pasture because they have less impact on the ground that way. He also minimizes his use of machinery, tillage,

and fertilizer. When he writes about his farm, he gives credit to God and glorifies Him. *It is only through His generosity that the farm prospers.* He also considers the way that *God created cows* to be and linked this to his *concern about methane gas*. Gary Davis said that it was much better for the cows to be outside where God intended them to be and that they had a lesser negative impact on the environment in terms of production of methane gas because of this. He kept his cows out of the river. He also cooperated with state agencies to turn horse manure from nearby stables into compost.

**Barry and Kelly King** consciously consider the ecological impact of their actions. Barry works at NRG (a company involved in renewable wind energy generation), where he is an electronics engineer. This allows Kelly to stay at home with her children and have more time to devote to causes that she considers important, including an organization called La Leche League. Both Barry and Kelly try to eat low on the food chain and avoid waste in their lives. One example that Kelly gave was buying big containers of yogurt rather than lots of small ones. She says that there are many examples of things that you can do that are both ecological and environmental. She calls this “doing well by doing good” and considers it all part of being a good Christian. Religion, in her view, is one more reason to do the right thing. It also increases your accountability to others who look at you as a *model of Christian living*. Kelly views her choices as causing her to be a healthier, happier person, especially because scripture says that people should rest.

**Anne Gnagey, her husband, Tom Baribault, and their boys** practice simple living. Anne says that the Earth is a tangible gift from God and that houses are naturally

different than dairy farms. Her and her husband use their home to provide for the needs for their family like food, shelter and clothing in a simple way that makes their family stronger even if it means focusing less on their desires. Anne said that her boys found this a little odd and even embarrassing at times when they were growing up. They would not want to invite their friends to come over since the lawn was never mowed. Now that the boys are older they really enjoy it and have a lot of projects going outside like a sled that they made to haul wood. They heat with wood, raise livestock, dig well, collect rainwater, live in a log cabin, and bicycle. Anne's parents also live around the corner so they do not have to travel far to see them. Now they have been inspired by their daughter's actions and have begun to let the land grow wild. They have noticed a visible change in the number of birds that come.

*Anne on our relationship to the earth:* The earth is like a coat that your mother makes for you in order for you to survive. If you have a coat like this, you should care for it.

**Nancy Carey** works with a wildlife rehabilitation organization that deals with mammals like skunks, foxes, porcupines, and squirrels. She said, "The Lord is my life and gave me a heart for animals... He made me aware that he would use me... The Lord taught me how much he cares for creation." She thinks this is important to share it with the people she comes in contact with through her work. Nancy generously gave us a book How to Rescue the Earth Without Worshipping Nature: A Christians Call to Save Creation by Tony Campolo.



*Thursday, November 11*  
*First United Methodist Church in Burlington*  
*Pastor Dick Hibbert*

Pastor Dick Hibbert of the First United Methodist Church met with us to discuss recent stewardship activities that the leadership and congregation have supported. Pastor Hibbert and other church leaders sponsor an annual forum each year in which social concerns such as missions, prevention of abuse and domestic violence, and Native American issues are brought up and discussed. Pastor Hibbert commented, “We have had a strong emphasis in this church over the years of looking at how our faith applies to what is happening in this world.” Topics of the forum generally depend on the concerns of the Church leadership. Inspired by his own concern for the earth, Pastor Hibbert suggested a forum to discuss the sacredness of Creation. He invited his friend Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*, to speak at their church about Creation and the relationship between his faith as a Christian and stewardship of the earth. McKibben spoke about global warming and energy usage as issues of faith and that they should concern Christians. McKibben explained that he applies his faith to all of the issues that he looks at, and specifically to environmental issues. The congregation of about 170 people attended the worship service and was receptive of the talk, along with intrigued and challenged by McKibben’s perspective as “a man of faith” and a United Methodist. McKibben was able to engage people on a faith level and explain that global warming is an issue of faith and that it is an appropriate issue for people of faith to address. Approximately 40 people stayed for a discussion afterwards on how approaches energy consumption and environmental awareness. The people who came to the forum were

people who were already aware and concerned about environmental issues, so this event served as an affirmation of their convictions.

Other activities sponsored by the church include intergenerational community hikes three or four times a year that often emphasize the connection between faith and nature. These outings often involve a worship or singing element; for example, they recently held a worship service on top of Mt. Mansfield.

The primary driving force behind these activities are the church pastors, but that does not discount the involvement of the congregation. Many congregants are personally involved in stewardship projects in the community, illustrating the interconnectedness of these issues. Pastor Hibbert emphasized, “People get their spiritual support and guidance for what they do here, and then they go out and do things in their own lives.” One member is responsible for the neighborhood garden program and has also connected the congregation with that program.

Most of the energy devoted toward stewardship is contributed by congregants in their 40s-50s, which is natural, according to Pastor Hibbert because they are

at a stage in life where [they are] questioning legacy. Older people are concerned more about health and security. People in their 30s are concerned about their families so environmental issues are seen as what kind of world your kids will grow up in. Adolescents and people in their 20s, there is an awareness and a concern for it, but it’s more like ‘we can solve this’ – there’s less of a pressing urgency.

Pastor Hibbert also talked about his own involvement in a local interfaith group that supports environmental issues. This group has helped sponsor showings in local churches of “Beat the Heat,” a performance produced to support the 10% Challenge. Pastor Hibbert also formed an eight-week stewardship study of about 25 people to look at

the sacredness of the environment and how people of faith relate to God's creation and what their role is in its care.

More recently, the group's role is evolving into a support group rather than an action group as each religious group is sponsoring their own activities or becoming involved in groups such as Vermont Interfaith Power & Light.

Pastor Hibbert's involvement in Creation care stems from the Biblically-based belief that the earth is sacred (see Psalm 24). God created the earth and it is holy; therefore it is sinful to damage it. Historic misrepresentation of scripture, primarily the book of Genesis, has greatly detracted from this Christian stewardship ethic. Pastor Hibbert attempts to foster stewardship by encouraging congregants to educate themselves on environmental issues by reading books such as McKibben's *End of Nature*. The United Methodist Church itself emphasizes the importance of stewardship in its *Book of Discipline*, which contains the social principles of the UMC and is revised every four years.

Pastor Hibbert emphasized the difference between personal morality and societal morality, arguing that issues such as economic and environmental justice are larger societal issues that need to be championed by the Christian community. He describes this difference in morality:

If you listen to what has been said in political campaigns recently and you look at the analysis of the recent elections, everyone's saying that the election turned on a question of moral values. And we have a divided nation in terms of our definition of moral values that the moral values issue that figured so prominently in people's decisions in the recent elections is issues of personal morals relating to issues of lifestyles and life choices and particularly of gay rights and abortion, those kinds of things. For a lot of us, morality is stronger and deeper than just personal behavior. It has to do with societies, it has to do with institutions, and it has to do with how we as individuals connect to one

another and act as a community in the world. So that economic justice, environmental justice, those kinds of things are moral values for us. And the root for that is scriptural, and our understanding of God as Creator of everything. The psalm 24 says “the Earth is the Lord’s.” That’s a basic, it’s a fundamental principle of Jewish faith, of Christian faith, and I think of all the major religions of the world. That somehow there’s a sacredness about this environment, this Creation. For Christians and for Jews we have a particular declaration that God is Creator and the source of all life and that everything that exists belongs to God. So that how we treat this is a demonstration of our relationship to God and our personal understanding of God.

Pastor Hibbert believes that the congregation understands the connection between stewardship and faith, but it is always a challenge for people to apply these beliefs to their actions. He explains that, “We can say that we believe that stewardship is a faith issue, but we don’t always act that way. Which is why we must continually bring up the issue and discuss the issue.”

The main obstacle for church stewardship actions is cost. The church would like to have an energy audit of their building, but it will be challenging if they have to pay for it. It also can be difficult to reach a consensus as to where funds should be dedicated. When competing priorities exist, such as terrorism and the war with Iraq, the congregation must decide which concern is most pressing and where their resources should be devoted. Another challenge is the consideration of the aesthetic quality of the church; when discussing renovations, the historic and traditional appearance of the 135-year-old church must be considered.

*November 14, 2004*

*All Saint's Episcopal Church, South Burlington*

*Reverend Steward Pierson and Emilian, UVM grad student in ES*

In this interview, Pastor Pierson expressed that his main frustration or obstacle was that the church simply did not know what the next step is for the congregation in terms of getting more involved beyond educating themselves about important environmental issues. They changed all of the lightbulbs to compact fluorescents a few years ago. They also have a labyrinth in the back of the church building that is focused on earth spirituality and “embracing the wholeness of the earth, the cycles of the nature, and the position of the planets.” Walking the labyrinth in a way is a symbolic substitute for religious pilgrimages that used to take place and still do in some parts of the world. On the winter solstice there are mirrors in the labyrinth that capture light and project the symbol of the cross on the snowy ground. However, when asked if the congregants connect the Earth spirituality recognized in through the labyrinth project with their own Christian spirituality, Reverend Pierson replied “no”. There is a lot of liturgy that refers to the earth and human responsibility to care for it as God’s creation including many verses from the beginning of Genesis that are familiar to the congregation like “This fragile earth, our island home” (from the Book of Common Prayer) that are referenced in the formal services the church provides. The regional Episcopal Diocese also provides liturgies to use that mention environmental themes.

Last May, there was an adult forum that was focused on environmental spirituality, specifically in the Old Testament. About 20 people attended and the Church along with Emilian are hoping to plan another forum that will focus on the New Testament. Genesis and John are two books that have a lot of material related to the

environment. This event was helpful because it was a way to take some material (the Bible) that the congregants were already comfortable with and just give them a different spin on it. It was very helpful to be able to show people that their faith should apply to their environmental beliefs as well, and that humans are in a partnership with the creator—we do not have control over the earth. There was a focus on the human's place in the grand order of Earth.

Another obstacle is figuring out what the congregation's priorities are. This is a small congregation—there were only about 30 people at the service. Common issues that the church works on are poverty and economic injustice, and homelessness.

There is not really any leadership outside of Pastor Pierson on any issue (not just the environment) because it is essentially the same group of people who come to all of the forums on all of the issues. So even though the Pastor said the congregation is open minded to environmental issues amongst other issues, and that the congregation is the motivator behind addressing all of these issues in some way, the large number of issues and small size of the congregation results in no set leadership besides the clergy.

*November 14, 2004*

*Vermont Zen Center—Shelburne, VT*

*Randy Crosby, with comments by Maria, Heather, Kelly, and Sensei Sunyana Graef*

Upon discussing what drew certain members to the Zen Buddhist faith, members Randy and Maria replied that they were drawn towards Zen Buddhism because they felt the religion stressed responsibility in the individual perhaps more than other faiths. Brought up in a Mormon household, Randy especially felt this sentiment of individual accountability and self-motivation was more prevalent in the Zen Buddhist tradition. Yes, he contended, there are precepts but he stressed that these were different from Commandments in that one is not demanded to follow the theories but rather is compelled by the drive to become more ethically conscious; they are not idealistic perfections to attain, but as guidelines to use in daily practice for deepening awareness. The precepts are not just about abstention, however, they have a positive, proactive dimension. Thus, members seemed to feel that the Zen Buddhist faith pushed them to look inwards and ask themselves answers to evaluate issues in their faith and everyday life; it is a faith that is driven not by answers but by questions. This aspect of Buddhism is very important to Randy who feels that there is a great lack of questioning in our society—such as the absence of civilian questioning about economic, foreign, or environmental policy made by the government—which generates stagnancy and lack of societal benefit and progression. Regardless of the origin of this silence (perhaps apathy, confusion, stigmas associated to dissent or criticism, etc.), Randy felt that we need to ask more question.

One reason Randy suggested for the lack of discussion or social criticism was that of lack of time and clarity of mind. The issue of time and clarity of mind is something that is

highly revered and emphasized in Zen Buddhism through the foundational practice of *Zazen* (which is literally, *za* “to sit” and *zen* “one-pointed concentration” or “absorption.” Thus, to do *zazen* is to sit with the mind intensely focused on one thing). Zen gives a space to be unburdened and think—to sit and do nothing but just that. However, this practice of sitting and taking the time to just think on one thing is not really allowed in our society. Randy was astounded and disappointed in the way that our society (to varying degrees) bombards one with thoughts, images, noises, etc. and in the way that we are expected or compelled to “always be on the go-go-go.” This rushing aspect of society without introspection is one of the generators, Randy feels, of social ailments (including environmental issues). He cited September 11<sup>th</sup> as an example of this problem: by September 12<sup>th</sup>, he said that there were people he considered conscious “leftists” who were ready to go to war; yet, he felt they never really examined the rationale or motivation for September 11<sup>th</sup>. They didn’t question and now look where we are (in negative reference to situation in Iraq). Randy also cited the jail system, in which he helps to run a fellowship, where one would think that you could get isolated time to think, there is never silence to allow for it, but always the heavy clanging of bars to remind prisoners of their surrounding, interrupting their thoughts.

Continuing in this idea of failing to question our actions and the status of society, Randy, without prompting, brought up the current controversy in Vermont about wind power turbines and climate change. He seemed to convey confusion or frustration with the controversy and the opposition to the turbines considering the mounting problem of global warming. He finds the opposition a result of people failing to question: questioning that global warming is a problem; questioning the importance of aesthetics as



compared to climate change; questioning how one could reconcile choosing aesthetics over the well-being of living things. Moreover, Randy pointed out, that people were failing to reconcile or connect their opposition to turbines when one looks at the proliferation of power lines that dot all over the landscape (if the modification of the ridgeline landscape is why they are opposed); not only are these arguably ugly, but they are highly corrosive and ongoing knowledge of their environmental and public health effects are growing. It is the lack of questioning and examination of these ramifications that allows people to resist the turbines.

When posed with the idea of how his Zen Buddhist faith affects his ecological thought, Randy brought up the idea of *karma*. This is the Buddhist concept or law of cause and effect, that one is the generator of not just his/her own destiny but that of others in that all actions have consequences upon humans the their surrounding environment. Furthermore, as Randy and other members pointed out, the Zen Buddhist faith stresses the idea of oneness and universalistic thinking in which the Self is not seen as separate from the Other. As reinforced by the first Precept “Not to Kill but to cherish all Life,” Buddhists are beckoned to see oneself as all else—killing other species (plant, animal, mineral, human) is ultimately killing oneself; there is no delineation or discrimination between “better species” but reverence for all species. This way of thinking was cited as the connection from their faith to environmental consciousness; every action we have has an effect, if this effect is negative we are ultimately destroying ourselves, and the consciousness of all things should be ubiquitous. Also cited as an environmentally-conscious-raising connection to the Buddhist faith was the fifth precept which says, “Not to cause others to take substances that confuse the mind nor to do so oneself but to keep

the mind clear”; while this precept is commonly connected to alcoholic consumption, as Sensei pointed out in the *teisho*, it can also be extended to unnecessary and wanton consumption, in general, which clearly affects the environment.

When questioned how in what way Zen Buddhism affects one's actions and thoughts about the environment, in terms of a direct or indirect influence, Randy commented that Zen Buddhism definitely affected how he lives his life from the values and practices it teaches but there is not necessarily a conscious linkage from the Buddhist teachings to his actions. Instead, he suggested that it influences the choices he makes overall in life (car we drive, what and amount of products he consumes, etc.). Thus, while there is a link in eco-consciousness and his faith, this is not a conscious process but just acting and, in doing so, putting those faith values into practice.

As a consequence of the Zen Buddhist foundation, Jed Graef, a member and husband to Sensei, feels that there has been little philosophical resistance but rather embracing of dialogue and structural implementation in the Zen Center of eco-consciousness. As Sensei pointed out, the center is entirely vegetarian as a consequence of the reverence for life and the ecological understanding that the impact on the environment is smallest when humans eat lower on the food chain. From observation and communication with Center members, it is apparent that a variety of measures are taken at the Center to be ecologically-minded including: radiant heating using Energy Star thermostat “Lexpro”-- which is propane based rather than oil--which is used with conservation, recycling as many materials as possible, composting all food scraps for the garden outside, using towels in bathrooms, using reusable dishware after sittings, some compact fluorescent

lightbulbs, and constructing the building with a bunch of wood from members' local wood lots. Randy also pointed out that the Center was situated on 80 acres which they got in part out of a dedication to the owner that the plot would not be subdivided and preserved (given that it is situated near wetlands). While there is not ongoing gathering in the outdoors, there are a number of gardens which members maintain as well as a fountain sitting area next to which people sometimes individually sit; also mentioned were informal group walks around the property and occasional Zen ceremonies outdoors (such as that of the Buddha's birth). It should be noted that there was almost all compact cars in the parking-lot, including a disproportionate number of "Echos" which are known for getting a high amount of miles per gallon (around 33 mpg). The main obstacle to further measures at the Center that members cited was economic; supposedly, pre-construction, the Center considered going solar, but it was considered too costly given their budget; Randy noted that the building is still being paid off now from a year and a half ago.

*November 21, 2004*

*Havurah Center (Middlebury Friends Meeting), Middlebury, VT*

*Mrs. Cheryl Mitchell, congregant*

In this meeting, I talked with Mrs. Cheryl Mitchell, a regular member of the Friends community of Middlebury. Initially, I had believed that Cheryl was the minister or head of the Quaker community in Middlebury. When asked about this, however, Cheryl told me that I was mistaken and that the Middlebury Friends community (as with all Quaker communities) worked on the basis of a rotating leadership. Every two years, co-clerks are elected from the congregation. These two members are responsible for taking care of the logistical measures of the community. Spiritually, six congregants compose the ministry council, and are responsible for promoting the spiritual health of the establishment. This council, I was told, meets once a month to discuss issues regarding pastoral care and ministry of the community. This lack of leadership surprised me, for every other religion I had visited thus far in this project has had one person in charge of elucidating the spiritual message to the rest of the congregants.

After learning about the structure of the religion, and where leadership came from, I decided to ask Cheryl a bit more about the Quaker religion. She told me how the religion itself is on the fringe of Christianity but that you did not have to be Christian to be a "Friend." She said there were many Buddhist and Jewish Friends who came to meetings as well. Cheryl also mentioned how Quakers lived by four main tenets or testimonies that were integral to how they lived their lives. These included the testimony of simplicity, peace, justice and equity. Cheryl told me that the testimonies of simplicity and equity were especially important in defining how Quakers viewed the environment and their relationship to it.

By accepting the testimony of simplicity, Quakers are supposed to live their lives in a relatively simple manner. In other words, I was told, they are supposed to be thankful for the simple things in life and are expected to leave a small footprint on the world. They are not to have excessive possessions or time involvements, and in general, are expected to consume less. They do not have the right to consume more than their fair share. Cheryl said that this testimony was what spurred many Quakers to purchase fuel efficient cars. By accepting the testimony of equity, Quakers are expected to help others and live and share equally with all. This includes environmentally, where they believe there should be equal access to environmental “goods” in society. These two values were expressed in the way in which the Middlebury Friends community carried out their services. For example, all congregants were allowed to speak whenever they wanted (on an equal plain) during the meeting. In addition, Cheryl told me that the group did not own their own property, but rather rented from the Jewish congregants who actually owned the Havurah center. She said that this was common with many Quaker groups, and that they all tried to rent from places that shared the same kinds of values as they did.

In addition to the testimonies, Cheryl told me that the religious book that they used for discussion and meetings, *Faith and Practice of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends*, contained an entire section (discussed once a year) on stewardship of the earth. The passage is as follows:

“Stewardship- Do you revere all life and the splendor of God’s continuing creation? Do you try to protect the natural environment and its creatures against abuse and harmful exploitation? Do you regard your possessions as given to you in trust, and do you part with them freely to meet the needs of others? Are you frugal in your personal life and committed to the just distribution of the world’s resources?” (*Faith and Practice*, 1985).

I was fascinated with how environmentally-involved and aware the Quaker religion seemed to be, so I decided to ask Cheryl what sorts of things the congregation here in Middlebury had been doing to try to live out these beliefs. Cheryl told me that many of them tried to buy fuel efficient cars, were highly involved with the community, had large vegetable gardens or farms, and each had taken the 10% challenge. This challenge was a test to see if you could reduce energy consumption in your personal life by 10%. Cheryl said that each member of the congregation completed this challenge. Cheryl also told me about Laura Asermily, another member, who worked with young people to teach them about environmental issues and energy consumption. Laura headed simplicity study circles to try to get people to teach to and learn from one another about how to live their lives in a simpler manner. Laura was also in charge of getting people involved in the Addison County Earth Day Fair every year. Cheryl told me that this was just one example of the types of things the Quaker community in Middlebury was doing. She also told me that environmental issues are generally accepted by other congregants.

When asked if Quakers met nationally on any level, I was told that Vermont and New Hampshire Quakers have quarterly meetings where they get together and talk about many issues, including some environmental ones. She said that at these meetings they have discussed such topics as man's position in relation to God's creation. On a national level, Cheryl told me that the Quakers produced a magazine, *Earthlight*, which talks about the Quaker relationship between spirit and the environmental world. She said that people of the Quaker faith appreciate their connection to the world and to the land itself and that this belief is very widespread nationally. Consequently, there are very few obstacles when trying to get congregants to accept an environmentally-related program.

The only major obstacle that she could come up with was that there were some strong personalities in the congregation, and that occasionally some members have felt as if they are being judged when they drive cars that are not fuel-efficient. Overall, however, this is a rare event.

At the end of my interview, I was left feeling like the Quakers were quite attuned to the environment, not just spiritually, but in their lifestyles as well. They do not just seem to accept the environmental views promoted by their faith, but rather live in a manner that encompasses these views as well.

*November 21, 2004*

*Richmond Congregational Church*

*Betsy Wackernagel (BW), Peter Swain (PS), JoEllen Swaine (JS), Ingrid Cichoski (IC), Kathy Court (KC), Bob Court (BC), and Ann Gnagey (AG).*

Many of these congregants are currently taking part in a voluntary simplicity course that is being offered by the Vermont Earth Institute and offered through the congregation.

JS: The earth is God's creation and we are stewards of the earth. He feels this obligation more on an individual basis than as a Christian and he feels that most people in the congregation who practice environmental stewardship do it on an individual basis and not as part of the congregation. He is interested in the politics of globalization.

KC: There is something written about earth stewardship in the Church mission statement:

The mission of Richmond Congregational Church (RCC), United Church of Christ, is to encourage the spiritual growth, personal peace, and well-being of all who seek a relationship with God through the Christian faith by providing a safe, open, nonjudgmental and nurturing atmosphere. We will provide community and mutual support through Christian fellowship and be instruments of peace and justice by reaching out to those in need and *by being good stewards of the world through action and example.*

BC: Environmental issues within the social action groups/committees of churches is not usually a priority. However, there is a connection between social action and the environment.

AG: The hesitation to work on environmental issues is political. People who are concerned about the environment are automatically associated with democrats. Right wing churches feel that they don't worship creation, they worship God and this belief



prevents them from working on environmental issues. However, if you love God and worship God, then there should be an automatic desire to take care of the earth.

KC: The UCC denomination is more left-leaning.

JS: But you must honor creation. The youth group did a trail crew project.

PS: Some people think that God will just take care of the environmental problems and that we shouldn't worry about them.

IC: At the congregation, they switched from Styrofoam to paper cups, which was good, but we need to take one more step. People should bring their own mugs from home.

BW: There could be a clean-up committee.

PS: We actually had to start using a bigger dumpster, which was a step in the wrong direction. We should be reducing the amount of waste that we produce, not increasing it. (Although, the dumpster is for the church, and the daycare center). And we do recycle.

BC: It only takes a few people to be the catalyst for change on these issues. When they were renovating the building and putting in a new roof, they wanted to have a copper roof, but nobody knew that it was bad for the environment, so I explained how particulates from the copper leach out into stormwater runoff and creates water pollution. Now they aren't getting a copper roof.

PS works for 7<sup>th</sup> generation

JS: It's hard to focus on one issue when there are so many things that need improvement.

BC: Thinks there should be a rain garden at the church, because right now all of the rain water runs off into the Winooski river.

*November 2004*  
*First Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington VT*  
*Reverend Gary Kowalski*

My in-depth phone interview with Rev. Gary Kowalski of the Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, VT provided detailed information about the congregation's connection with the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), the activities the congregation is pursuing to mitigate its environmental impact with specific reference to global climate change, and the environmental components of their educational programs for adults and children. Kowalski spoke of the collaboration between congregational leadership and members in spearheading activities or programs to address issues important to the congregation. Though Rev. Kowalski listed and described numerous approaches to facilitating environmental activism and Earth consciousness he repeatedly articulated the feeling that even with their programs the congregation was hardly doing more than scratching surface of really mitigating their impact on the environment and especially global climate change. He stated that the main obstacle in implementing environmental programs into the Burlington UU religious life has been reconciling just living in American and Western culture; "within this culture and economy our way of life is based on consumerism and transportation – a consumer culture is encouraged, and every day we are dependent on the internal combustion engine to get around", said Kowalski. This congregation is the epitome of including issues of scale in targeting an issue – this may be the most proactive congregation I have encountered during this project. Yet there is still a sense of helplessness, in a sense because climate change and environmental degradation are such large issues to try to mitigate and because any results are either hard to see or hard to interpret. Below is a list

of activities that the Unitarian Universalist Society of Burlington, VT has implemented and been involved in:

### **National and International Affiliation with UUA**

At last year's Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly meeting Rev. Gary Kowalski wrote a proposal for a two year study focusing on a UUA resolution for the impending crisis of mass species extinction. There were two proposals at the General Assembly meeting that warranted focus – one being Rev. Kowalski's mass extinction proposal and the second being a proposal to focus on issues of global climate change. Rev. Kowalski withdrew his proposal and rallied behind the global climate change proposal so as not to divide the vote in the General Assembly. Subsequently the UUA will be focused on issues of global climate change for the next two years.

Concern for earth is included in the Seventh Principle of the Unitarian statement of principles to which all Unitarians subscribe- the Seventh Principle provides a description of an interdependent web of life and the necessity to respect it. In 1980s the principles were revised and a statement regarding the Earth care was included as close to the heart of Unitarian faith.

### **Regional action**

At the district conference (VT and NH) there was a workshop held on "Nature as the Primordial Sacrament". During the workshop many topics were discussed: the feeling of being in kinship with the natural world; recognizing the beauty of the natural world; being revitalized by the natural world; the natural world as an elemental form of human spirituality; the consistent presence of the natural world in the background of all faiths; the environment as a natural sense of human biology- part of being a human

animal is the need for nature, and nature as the lifeblood of spirituality and physical reality- which leads into the idea that humans become subhuman when cut off from the natural world.

### **UU Burlington**

- An energy audit has been completed; the congregation is continually trying to maintain and improve the energy efficiency of the building which like many buildings of faith is older and draughty. Work has been done to improve the energy efficiency of the windows.
- Wes Sanders' play *Beat the Heat* has been performed at the UU church along with other places in Burlington.
- The congregation is continually trying to think of ways to reduce consumption; so far they have stopped using Styrofoam cups or disposable plates at coffee hour, and fair exchange coffee is served at coffee hour and at social services.
- There is a bike rack at the church and people are encouraged to use it.
- Environmentally related songs in hymnals are sung during services.

### **Education**

- Adult study programs on simplicity, deep ecology, and choices for sustainable living (last year) are organized each year
- There have been two viewings of *Affluenza* followed by discussions.
- The social action committee has recently been publicizing Buy Nothing Day. Similarly, the social action committee will start courses on globalization which Kowalski says is "related to so many of our problems; these problems arise from the growing power of corporations whom are making choices for every day

citizens. The corporations are proponents of acquiring more and more material possessions from distant places which subsequently withers the local economy”.

The classes on globalization will be taught for 8 weeks.

- One of the Sunday school trimesters in the spring for primary grade students has focused on consumerism, buying power, and want vs. need. The children in these age groups have also participated in Green Up days; along the same lines, the children have attended classes at Ethan Allen homestead where the focus of class has been talking about stewardship of the land.
- Within the last 2 years the congregation has organized a series of educational meetings on eating responsibly with the assistance of a former board member of the Sierra Club. These focus groups have emphasized the benefits of a vegetarian diet for animal issues, environmental issues, and also issues of global climate change since the transportation of our present food supply is fossil fuel dependent

### **Other Environmental Activism**

- The whole congregation is involved in Green Up Day
  - Rev. Gary Kowalski is personally interested in issues of the wellbeing of animals.
- The congregation participates in the Blessing of the Animals service annually; the focus of this service is caring for Earth and its creatures.

### **Books by Rev. Gary Kowalski**

Rev. Kowalski mentioned the books he has written as possible sources of information and inspiration for religious persons interested in environmental issues.

Below is a list of the books he has written.

The Souls of Animals

<http://freewebhosting.hostdepartment.com/G/Gkowalski/souls.htm>

The Bible According to Noah: Theology as if Animals Mattered

<http://www.lanternbooks.com/index.html>

Science and the Search for God

<http://www.lanternbooks.com/index.html>

*December 1, 2004*  
*Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society*  
*Steve Maier, congregant*

Steve Maier has been involved with the incorporation of environmental themes and the Unitarian Universalist (UU) faith on both a local level with the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society (CVUUS) and on a national level as a member of the board of the Seventh Principle Project in affiliation with the Unitarian Universalist Association for the past three years. The Seventh Principle focuses on how the Seventh Principle of the UU faith, which emphasizes the interdependence and respect of all life, can be applied to UU worship, services, building design, and education. The Seventh Principle is a ground-breaking idea in that many congregations in the Judeo-Christian tradition that we interviewed were proponents of Earth stewardship, which Steve Maier described as consequently recognizing a hierarchy in existence; whereas the Seventh Principle does not recognize any hierarchy in living things- it emphasizes an *interdependence*. The Seventh Principle Project has produced two documents in the past six months: "Honoring Earth," which contains worship and service ideas focusing on the earth, and a book that lists resources for religious education about the earth. There is also an "Earth and Spirit Songbook," which has changed traditional hymns to focus on the earth, a book that CVUUS has used a few times in services.

Since the UU church has no specific creed or belief system, congregations include participants from many different backgrounds such as Christian, Jew, Buddhist, Pagans, atheists, and agnostics. CVUUS conducts periodic surveys of the congregation and recently noted that a large number of people in the congregation identify with more than one of the major religious traditions and that many congregants have an earth-centered

spirituality, yet not necessarily Pagan. For some members it is a more important religious and spiritual experience to walk in the woods on Sunday morning than go to the service.

A number of leaders of CVUUS are strong environmentalists and environmental themes are common in the many services led by lay-people; such leaders include Professors Steve Trombulak and Rich Wolfson. Steve Maier has led a number of sermons on environmental themes, such as the Earth Day service 3 years ago and a sermon on “Eight ways people connect with the Earth”. According to Steve Maier, “more often than not the services and readings in the services are Earth centered”.

CVUUS has an annual Earth Day service, which includes earth-centered readings and service, as well as other less traditional elements. They have held an “Earth Jam” with African drumming to demonstrate the many ways that humans connect with the natural world, such as art, music, movement, and yoga. These activities may produce similar spiritual responses as walking in the woods or gardening. There are intergenerational aspects of these services as younger children are encouraged to color and share their experiences related to the earth. A component of the Earth Day service is a children’s pageant.

The youth educational program runs on 2-3 year cycles, and themes are not repeated within the cycle. Currently the youth group in seventh through ninth grade are participating in a program with a theme on sexuality. This program also has an outdoor curriculum every other week that involves activities such as walking, climbing, and Tai Chi to foster an appreciation for the outdoors. Children’s services are also held outside on occasion.



The main obstacle preventing more earth-related activities in the CVUUS is the lack of leadership. Though Lauren Aldrich completed an energy audit last summer, it has been difficult to generate enthusiasm to follow the Green Sanctuary Project because nobody has time or energy to champion the issue. Although, the congregants agree it is important to have an energy efficient building. Another activity that has not come into fruition has been the desire for a bike rack for a number of years, but the congregation still does not have one. There is no philosophical resistance to these projects, large and small, however there are noteworthy time and financial restrictions.

Financial resources are also an obstacle for this congregation as they are for most institutions, but members have expressed the sentiment that environmentally-friendly measures should be used despite higher cost. The congregation has recently grown to the extent that there are now two services provided out of necessity. A questionnaire was recently sent to members asking about the building of a new sanctuary (the church is currently starting renovations and expansions) and there was an overall positive response about the incorporation of green design, regardless of the higher cost.

UUs are also involved in action against climate change on a national level. At the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) national, annual meeting, they decided to make global climate change their study action issue for the next two years. The theme was competing with another environmental issue, mass species extinction, but in the end support was given to the climate change theme so as to avoid dividing members concerned specifically with environmental issues. The two year commitment means that congregations will implement study action groups this year and next year at the UUA meeting congregations will give feedback from their respective study groups;

subsequently there will be a Declaration of Conscience by the UUA on the subject of climate change.

In closing, the interview with Steve Maier gave insight into a religious community that is very conscious of environmental issues and gives moral support for caring for Earth and all interdependent forms of life. Yet, the congregation also seems very aware of its short fallings, what projects have not been spearheaded, and why it has not tackled those issues, time, energy, and money. Talking with Steve gave a UUA perspective and a more local perspective on how the CVUUS responds to national trends and declarations as a smaller community.

## **Appendix E: Resource Kit Materials**

Resource Kit

Published for VIPL on 12/12/04

Dear reader:

We hope that you have found our results of our research this fall as part of our environmental studies class at Middlebury College insightful. Now that we have come to the end of the time allotted to our project, we leave it up to you to decide what step to take next. In the pages that follow, you will find a compilation of several materials that we intended to be both informative and inspirational. These resources, produced by us this fall, are available both here and in electronic form on the website. They should be made readily available to congregations that request them. We plan on sending select ones out to the congregations that expressed an interest in receiving them during the interview process this fall. Feel free to develop new resources as you proceed with this work in 2005 and beyond. Education should be one of the primary focuses of VIPL as it develops, since congregations often cited a lack of information as being one of the main obstacles to their engagement in environmental stewardship activities. By providing congregations with resources, you can make great strides towards the goal of reducing the impact of Vermont religious institutions on the Earth.

Good luck!

Sincerely,

Lauren Ziegler & Judith Schutter

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Interfaith Quotes on Preservation of the Earth

Literature List

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Coffee talk & Fair Trade Coffee

Energy Efficiency Tips

## Interfaith Quotes for Preservation of and Care for the Earth

"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and all those who live in it." **Psalm 24:1**

"Greater indeed than the creation of humankind is the creation of the heavens and the earth. Yet, most of humanity does not understand." **Qur'an 40:57**

"The relationship between the human community and the natural world cannot be healed by a single, particular faith, but only by a profound understanding that all faiths should revere a single Earth." **Tom Hayden, in *The Lost Gospel of the Earth***

"The Holy Blessed One took the first human, and passing before all the trees of the Garden of Eden, said, 'See my works, how fine and excellent they are! All that I created, I created for you. Reflect on this, and do not corrupt or desolate my world; for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you.'" **Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13**

"It would go a great way to caution and direct people in the use of the world, that they were better studied and known in the Creation of it. For how could Man find the Confidence to abuse it, while they should see the Great Creator stare them in the face, in all and every part thereof?" **William Penn in *Some Fruits of Solitude***

"The Lord placed the Human Being in the Garden of Eden to till it and to tend it." **Genesis 2:15**

"Ask the animals, and they shall teach you; the birds of the air, and they shall instruct you. Speak to the earth and it shall teach you." **Job 12:7-8**

"We eat not simply to satisfy our own appetites, we eat to sustain ourselves in the task we have been given. Each of us is unique coming into the world with a gift no other can offer: ourselves. We eat to nourish the vehicle of giving, we eat to sustain our task of world repair, our quest for harmony, peace and justice." **Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro from *Earth Prayers***

"Tzedek, tzedek tirdof.... Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may thrive and dwell in the land that the Eternal your God is giving you." **Deuteronomy 16:20**

"There is nothing more tragic in all the world than to know right and not to do it." **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

"The dramatic threat of ecological breakdown is teaching us the extent to which greed and selfishness . . . are contrary to the order of creation. . . . The ecological crisis is a moral issue." **Pope John Paul II**

"There is enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed." **Mahatma Gandhi**

"Faith without action is dead." **James 2:17**

...[T]he Earth is ultimately *a common heritage, the fruits of which are for the benefit of all*. . . It is manifestly unjust that a privileged few should continue to accumulate excess goods, squandering available resources, while masses of people are living in conditions of misery at the very lowest level of existence. Today, the dramatic threat of ecological breakdown is teaching us the extent to which greed and selfishness – both individual and collective – are contrary to the order of creation, an order which is characterized by mutual interdependence.” Pope John Paul II “*The Ecological Crisis: A Common Responsibility*”, 1990

“Be the change you wish to see in the world.” **Mahatma Gandhi**

“Before you finish eating breakfast this morning, you've depended on more than half the world. This is the way our universe is structured. . . . We aren't going to have peace on earth until we recognize this basic fact of the interrelated structure of reality.” **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

“When you realize you have enough, then you are truly rich.” **Tao Teh Ching**

"It is He Who produce gardens, with trellises and without, and dates, and tilth with produce of all kinds, and olives and pomegranates, similar in kind and different in variety; Eat of their fruit in their season, but render the dues that are proper on the day of the harvest is gathered. But waste not by excess; for Allah love not the wasters." **The Quran 6:141**

“The earth is mother of all that is natural, of all that is human.” **St. Hildegard of Bingen**

“I believe that to meet the challenge of our times, human beings will have to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility.... It is the best foundation for world peace, the equitable use of natural resources and, through concern for future generations, the proper care of the environment.” **The 14th Dalai Lama**

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" **Phil. 2:4-8**

“We, all of us, are being called to do something unprecedented. We are being called to think about 'everything that is,' for we now know that everything is interrelated and that the well-being of each is connected to the well-being of the whole. This suggests a 'planetary agenda' for all the religions, all the various fields of expertise.” **Sallie McFague, theologian**

“Is not the sky a father, and the earth a mother, and are not all living things with feet and roots their children?” **Black Elk**

"Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land. The LORD almighty has declared in my hearing: 'Surely the great houses will become desolate, the fine mansions left without occupants. A ten-acre vineyard will produce only a bath of wine, a homer of seed only an ephah of grain.'" (**Isaiah 5:8-10**)

"The present threat to mankind's survival can be removed only by a revolutionary change in individual human beings. This change of heart must be inspired by religion in order to generate the will power needed for putting arduous new ideals into practice." **Jonathan Porritt, of Friends of the Earth**

"Water flows from high in the mountains. Water runs deep in the Earth. Miraculously, water comes to us, and sustains all life." **Thich Nhat Hanh**

"Only when we see that we are part of the totality of the planet, not a superior part with special privileges, can we seek effectively to bring about an earth restored to wholeness." **Elizabeth Watson**

"The faith community has led every major movement in the US. No institution is more suited to preach clean air, water, and land than the institution that professes a love of God and God's creation. " **Rev. Sally Bingham, National Director, IP&L**

## Interconnection Faith and the Earth Literature List

### *Christianity-focused resources*

#### ❖ General Discussions/Overviews

Barnette, Henlee H. *The Church and the Ecological Crisis*. Eerdmans, 1972.

Berry, R. J., ed. *Care of Creation: Focusing Concern and Action*. InterVarsity Press, 2000.

Bradley, Ian C. *God is Green: Ecology for Christians*. Image Books, 1992.

Campolo, Tony. *How to Rescue the Earth Without Worshipping Nature: A Christian's Call to Save Creation*. Nashville: Nelson, 1992.

Gelderloos, Orin. *Eco-Theology: The Judeo-Christian Tradition and the Politics of Ecological Decision Making*. Wild Goose Publications, 1992.

Hoezee, Scott. *Remember Creation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Jung, Shannon. *We Are at Home: A Spirituality of the Environment*. Paulist Press, 1993.

Santmire, H. Paul. *Brother Earth: Nature, God and Ecology*. Nelson, 1970.

Van Dyke, Fred et al. *Redeeming Creation: The Biblical Basis for Environmental Stewardship*. Dowers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

Wilkinson, Loren. *Earthkeeping in the '90s: Stewardship of Creation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.

#### ❖ Biblical Basis for Creation Care

Achtemeier, Elizabeth. *Nature, God & Pulpit*. Eerdmans, 1992.

Badke, William B. *Project Earth: Preserving the World God Created*. Multnomah, 1991.

Bergant, Dianne. *The Earth is the Lord's: The Bible, Ecology, and Worship*. Liturgical Press, 1998.

LeQuire, Stan L, ed. *Best Preaching on Earth: Sermons on Caring for Creation*. Judson, 1996.

Kirk, Janice E. and Donald R. Kirk. *Cherish the Earth: The Environment and Scripture*. Herald Press, 1993.

Shaw, Vera. *Thorns in the Garden Planet: Meditations on the Creator's Care*. Nashville: Nelson, 1993.

❖ How to Care for Creation

Donahoe, Sydney L. *Earth Keeping: Making It a Family Habit*. Zondervan, 1990.

Hollender, Jeffrey. *How to Make the World a Better Place: 116 Ways You Can Make a Difference*. Norton, 1995.

Wilkinson, Loren and Mary Ruth Wilkinson. *Caring for Creation in Your Own Backyard: Over 100 Things Christian Families Can Do to Help the Earth*. Servant, 1992.

### *Judaism-focused resources*

Bernstein, Ellen. *Ecology and the Jewish Spirit: Where Nature and the Sacred Meet*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998.

Bush, Lawrence and Jeffrey Dekro. *Jews, Money, and Social Responsibility: Developing a "Torah of Money" for Contemporary Life*. Philadelphia: The Shefa Fund, 1993.

Elon, Ari, Naomi Hyman, and Arthur Waskow, eds. *Trees, Earth and Torah: A Tu B'Shvat Anthology*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1999.

Isaacs, Ronald H. *The Jewish Sourcebook on the Environment and Ecology*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998.

Rabinowitz, Louis I. *Torah and Flora*. Sanhedrin Press, 1979.

Stein, David E. *A Garden of Choice Fruit: 200 Classic Jewish Quotes on Human Beings and the Environment*. Philadelphia: Shomrei Adamah, 1991.

Tirosh-Samuelson, Hava, ed. *Judaism and Ecology Volume: Religions of the World and Ecology Series*. Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, 2002.

❖ Available from Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life ([www.coejl.org](http://www.coejl.org))

*Texts and Commentaries on Biological Diversity and Human Responsibility: A Study Guide* (1996).

*To Till and To Tend: A Guide to Jewish Environmental Study and Action* (1994).

### *Buddhism-focused resources*

Abraham, Ralph. "Orphism: The Ancient Roots of Green Buddhism." In *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology*, ed. Allan Hunt Badiner, 39–49. Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press, 1990.



Davies, Shann, ed. *Tree of Life: Buddhism and the Protection of Nature*. Hong Kong: Buddhist Perception of Nature Project, 1987.

Eppsteiner, Fred., ed. *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*. Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press, 1988.

Ingram, Catherine. *In the Footsteps of Gandhi: Conversations with Spiritual Social Activists*. Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press, 1990.

Jones, Ken. *Beyond Optimism: A Buddhist Political Ecology*. Oxford: Jon Carpenter, 1993.

Kabilsingh, Chatsumarn. "How Buddhism Can Help Protect Nature." In *Tree of Life: Buddhism and Protection of Nature*, ed. Shann Davies, 7–15. Hong Kong: Buddhist Perception of Nature Project, 1987.

Kaza, Stephanie. "The Gridlock of Domination: A Buddhist Response to Environmental Suffering." In *The Greening of Faith: God, the Environment, and the Good Life*, ed. John E. Carroll, et al., 141–57. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1997.

Morgante, Amy, ed. *Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter*. Cambridge, Mass.: Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, 1997.

Sandell, Klas, ed. *Buddhist Perspectives on the Ecocrisis*. Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1987.

Sivaraksa, Sulak. "How Societies Can Practice the Precepts." In *For a Future to Be Possible: Commentaries on the Five Wonderful Precepts*, ed. Thich Nhat Hanh, 110–14. Berkeley, Calif.: Parallax Press, 1993.

Sotoshu Shumucho. *International Symposium: The Future of the Earth and Zen Buddhism*. Tokyo: Sotoshu Shumucho, 1991.

Yamaoka, Seigen H. *A Buddhist View of the Environment*. San Francisco, Calif.: Buddhist Churches of America, 1991.

### *Interfaith resources*

Foltz, Richard C. *Worldviews, Religion, and the Environment: A Global Anthology*. Wadsworth Publishing, 2003.

Nash, James A. *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Religion and the Order of Nature*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Rockefeller, Steven C., and John C. Elder, eds. *Spirit and Nature*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992

❖ General insights about the environment and human nature

Brower, David. *Let the mountains talk, let the rivers run: a call to those who would save the earth.* San Francisco: HarperCollins West, 1995.

Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring.* Houghton-Mifflin, 1994.

Dadd, Deborah. *Nontoxic, Natural, and Earthwise: How to Protect Yourself and Your Family from Harmful Products and Live in Harmony with the Earth.* Putnam Publishing, 1990.

Ehrlich, Anne and Paul. *One with Nineveh : politics, consumption, and the human future.* Washington: Shearwater Books, 2004.

Gelbspan, Ross. *Boiling Point.* New York : Basic Books, 2004.

Goldbeck, Nikki and David. *Choose to Reuse.* Woodstock, NY : Ceres Press, 1995.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There.* Oxford University Press, 1949.

McKibben, Bill. *The End of Nature.* Random House, 1989.

Schumacher, E. F. *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered.* Harper and Row, 1973.

## Resources available for Baptist churches in Vermont

**Did you know that *The American Baptist Church* passed a resolution on global warming in 1991 that calls for American Baptist institutions and individuals to deepen the understanding of creation and the gifts that God has bestowed us while joining in local, national, and global efforts “safeguard the world’s atmospheric integrity” by decreasing greenhouse gas emissions?**

This resolution, which expands upon the 1988 Policy Statement on Ecology that notes our responsibility to God for the care of creation (Genesis 1:1, 11-12) and of God's displeasure with humanity's misuse of creation, calls for Baptists acknowledge the role of their faith within creation and to act as part of a “unified creation” by decreasing their contribution to global warming. As a local measure, the resolution cites building and renovating homes and churches to be energy efficient, buying ecologically-conscious products that consume less energy in production, and creating educational programs with energy conservation components. At a responsive, macro-level, the resolution summons churches to support legislation that increases fuel efficiency in vehicles and encourage an international treaty that specifically targets reduction of greenhouse gases. The full text can be found at: <http://www.abc-usa.org/resources/resol/globwarm.htm>.

**Many Baptist churches in Vermont are currently trying to fulfill this mission. Several interviewed by Middlebury College students in fall 2004 as part of a project with *Vermont Interfaith Power and Light*, provide suggestions for ways to do this.**

The *Springfield-Calvary Baptist Church* in Springfield follows the ideas elucidated by the resolution on global warming by **decreasing the church’s energy use**. In addition to **recycling** and **using compact fluorescent** lightbulbs, the church **encourages the congregants to carpool** to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

The *Bennington First Baptist Church* in Bennington cited the Statements of Concern from the American Baptist Church and echoed sentiments of the resolution when speaking of their **sermons which reinforce ideas of stewardship**. The church also **encourages recycling** and is **upgrading its electrical system** to make it more efficient. They also noted this upgrading had the additional benefit of being financially beneficial.

The *United Church of Lincoln* in Lincoln exemplifies using ecologically-conscious products by **using Seventh Generation** bathroom supplies, which are sustainably-produced. The issues of ecological preservation are **global warming** are discussed in sermons as well as **coffee-time discussions**. The Church has sponsored **Green-Up cleanups, pulling of the invasive species** along the river, **recycling**, and various land-based activities including an **interfaith tree planting** ceremony which facilitated connections to other faiths under the understanding that they all sought to preserve the Earth because, in each faith, it had an aspect of sacredness and is crucial to life.

## Resources available for Episcopal churches in Vermont

**Did you realize that *The Episcopal Church* actually passed a resolution at the 70<sup>th</sup> General Convention affirming the responsibility of its members for the earth in this and future generations?**

It calls on Episcopalians to reflect on their personal and corporate habits in the use of God's creation, share with one another ideas for new responses, and act as individuals, congregations, diocese, and provinces of the Episcopal Church in ways that protect and heal all interdependent parts of creation. The full text can be found at:

<http://www.webofcreation.org/education/policystatement/episcopal>

**Many Episcopal churches in Vermont actively try to carry this mission out. Several, interviewed by Middlebury College students in fall 2004 as part of a project with *Vermont Interfaith Power and Light*, provide good suggestions for ways to do this.**

The *Jerusalem Gathering Church in Bristol* mentioned that they receive regular emails from the **Peace and Justice branch of the Episcopal Church** alerting them to actions in Congress that pertain to the environment, which they then discuss.

At the *St. James Episcopal Church in Essex Junction*, they have **special services** devoted to care of creation four times a year. They discuss issues around natural resource use, pollution, and forestry. On St. Francis Day, they even have a blessing for the animals and discuss the importance of caring for all animals.

The *All Saints Episcopal Church in South Burlington* explained how the **Diocese of New England** strongly encourages care of creation by passing resolutions and providing curriculum materials to individual churches who would like them. In their church, they use **compact fluorescent light bulbs**, **recycle**, **reuse their coffee cups**, and even try to **promote carpooling**. They also **discuss climate change** specifically.

### **The New England Diocese is doing a lot too.**

In February of 2003, the Episcopal Bishops of Vermont published a letter about how to serve Christ in all creation. They include a paragraph specifically on climate change:

One of the most daunting challenges we face is global climate change. Many scientists agree that if we burn fossil fuels at expected rates, global warming caused by human activities could raise worldwide average temperatures between 3 and 11 degrees Fahrenheit in this century. In New England, climate change may cause flooding in coastal areas, reduce the quality of our region's fresh water, imperil agriculture, and increase the outbreaks of infectious disease. Within this century, New England may lose its maple, birch, and beech trees. We face the loss of our spectacular fall colors and the end of fall-foliage tourism, as well as the destruction of our region's maple sugar industry. (1)

The full text of the letter, along with links to other resources, can be found online at:

<http://www.dioceseofvermont.org/Environment/BpsEnvLtr.html>

## Resources available for Jewish synagogues in Vermont

**Do you know that Jewish traditions and teachings from the Torah have been a strong driving force for them to lead by example and address environmental issues?**

One example of many would be the law of *Bal Tash'chit*, the biblical prohibition against the wanton destruction of nature. It comes from a passage in Deuteronomy that reads:

"When you besiege a city for a long time, fighting against it to conquer it, you shall not destroy the trees thereof by wielding an axe against them; for you may eat of them, and you may not cut them down, for is the tree of the field a person that it should be besieged by you? Only trees which you know not to be fruit bearing trees, may you destroy and cut down; and you may build bulwarks against the city that wars against you, until it is subdued."

**Synagogues in Vermont, regardless of their affiliation, have gotten involved. Several interviewed by Middlebury College students in fall 2004 as part of a project with Vermont Interfaith Power and Light, provide suggestions for ways to do this.**

The *Israel Congregation in Manchester* observes the holiday of *Tash'chit* that traditionally marks the birthday of the trees planted throughout the year. For their congregation, the holiday is more about environmental and ecological awareness than trees specifically, especially because it falls in February when Vermont trees, unlike trees in Israel, are not flowering.

The *Congregation Beth El in Bennington* includes an environmental component in their Judaism school and has hosted workshops on creating eco-kosher homes.

The *Rutland Jewish Center* uses energy efficient light bulbs and refrains from using too many disposable dishes. They even teach the value of *bal tashchit* (prevention of needless waste) to the children in religious school. The rabbi also addresses environmentalism in sermons and is involved in COEJL.

### **What is COEJL?**

It stands for the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life and is one of your biggest resources. COEJL's mission is to deepen the Jewish community's commitment to the stewardship of creation and mobilizes the resources of Jewish life and learning to protect the Earth and all its inhabitants. They do this through their website ([www.coejl.org](http://www.coejl.org)), publications, and letter writing campaigns. They even have a list of the top ten actions that individuals can take to address global warming, including planting trees and organizing energy conservation programs in synagogues.

## Resources available for Quaker meeting houses in Vermont

**Did you know that foundational testimonies of the Quaker tradition as well as the self-organized structure of the Society of Friends have been the strong motivational forces pushing Friends to the forefront of the environmental movement?**

Crucial historical and contemporary testimonies of Peace, Simplicity, Equality, Community, and Justice have profound connections to environmental consciousness and preservation. These testimonies are all crucial to the idea of environmental sustainability as it is an idea highly dependent on intergenerational and intrageneration equity, sustainable use of resources among communities, and environmental justice, which necessitate a degree of simplicity in one's living. The foundational beliefs and queries of the Quaker faith prepare congregants with a unique and mutualistic relationship to the environment. Quakers' unique quality of being self-organized, rather than directed from a denominational head or body, encourages the same type of grassroots initiative necessary in the environmental movement. This query-based faith benefits from the discussions that result, including a *Society of Friends Statement on Global Climate Change*, which compelled Friends organizations to seek Divine Guidance in understanding how to: reduce their use of energy and material resources; support strong international agreements for reducing greenhouse gas emissions; promote national policies for assuring energy and resource conservation; participating in a transition to less damaging technologies in our industries, agriculture, buildings and transportation. For full text see: <http://www.webofcreation.org/ncc/statements/sof.html>; for more info see: [www.quakerearthcare.org](http://www.quakerearthcare.org)

**Many Friends congregations in Vermont have utilized these testimonials as inspiration to get involved and respond to the Statement. Several, interviewed by Middlebury College students in fall 2004 as part of a project with *Vermont Interfaith Power and Light*, provide good examples of what you can do.**

Congregants among the *Friends Meeting House* in Middlebury have sought to minimize their global impact by buying **fuel efficient cars**, are highly involved with the community in environmental initiatives, and have large vegetable **gardens** or farms. The congregation **form study circles that discuss environmental issues** of simplicity, equity, and climate change and **have completed the 10% challenge**, a test to see if you could **reduce energy consumption in your personal life by 10%.**

The *Religious Society of Friends* in Burlington connects their founding testimonials to environmentalism through **the Earthcare Committee**, which makes announcements of ecological issues in Meeting and in the newsletter. In recognition of their responsibility for their climatic impact, they **have installed compact fluorescents**, use a very **efficient heater**, use **reusable dishware and napkins**, and **implemented a “tax” or donation of 10 cents per gallon** purchased to the Meeting that will be **donated to a climate-change non-profit organization.**

## Resources available for Roman Catholic Parishes in Vermont

Were you aware that the United States Catholic bishops generated a public statement at their June 2001 General Assembly meeting called “Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good,” in which the bishops assert that “At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both ‘the human environment’ and the natural environment.”

This statement asserts the need for a dialogue about global climate change that is not partisan nor scientifically polarizing, but a “distinctively religious and moral perspective to what is necessarily a complicated scientific, economic, and political discussion”; they feel that the response to the challenge of climate change must be rooted in the virtue of prudence. The statement notes that Pope John Paul II has frequently discerned the ethical questions that lie at the heart of environmental degradation and has noted our common responsibility for stewardship of creation. Because inaction to climate change is expected to disproportionately burden the poor, responses to mitigate global warming must be rooted in social and economic justice. Out of respect for God’s creation, and the traditions of the Catholic faith, the statement compels congregations to focus on the needs of the poor and the vulnerable in a debate “often dominated by more powerful interests.” For full text see <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.htm>.

**A couple Catholic parishes in Vermont are currently trying to fulfill this mission. Several interviewed by Middlebury College students in fall 2004 as part of a project with *Vermont Interfaith Power and Light*, provide suggestions for ways to do this.**

The *St. Dominic Parish* in Proctor acknowledged that the **American Council of Catholic Bishops thoroughly analyzes** issues relating the **Catholic faith to environmental problems**. As such and out of inspiration from their Catholic faith, the parish sometimes **incorporates issues of water quality, pollution, and global warming in sermons** on creation care. While not organized through the church, many **individuals are involved in environmental groups** within the community. The parish uses **compact fluorescents** and **recycles** out of a feeling of **collective responsibility** as God’s children to take care of the Earth or creation.

The *Christ the King Parish* in Burlington works in the Vermont Interfaith Action group to **campaign for local care for the Earth** and bringing speakers in to talk about the environment. The parish also utilizes materials from the National Catholic Education Association, which **incorporates curriculum materials about the environmental protection, Earth stewardship, resource use**, and more. While the parish has few sermons that touch on the environment, they try to raise environmental consciousness by **encouraging energy efficiency** in turning off lights, saving heat, and recycling.

## Resources available for Unitarian Universalists in Vermont

**Do you know that the call for justice in the community that is central to the Unitarian Universalist faith has been a strong driving force for them to lead efforts to address environmental issues?**

Your seventh principle, that it is your duty to “affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part,” has been the basis of a project that recognizes congregations that really work to follow that mission.

**The Green Sanctuary Program is one of your biggest resources**

It has five equally important goals:

- To build awareness of societal environmental issues among UU’s;
- To generate commitment for personal lifestyle changes;
- To motivate UU’s to community action on environmental issues;
- To build a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness;
- To build awareness and rectify environmental injustices

Your congregation can actually apply to be accredited as a “green sanctuary” by planning activities incorporating environmental awareness and action into worship and celebration, religious education, environmental justice, and sustainable living. For more information, check out [www.uuaspp.org](http://www.uuaspp.org) On the website you will also find additional resources like an energy audit worksheet and examples of environmental sermons.

**Many Unitarian Universalist congregations in Vermont have gotten involved. Several, interviewed by Middlebury College students in fall 2004 as part of a project with *Vermont Interfaith Power and Light*, provide good examples of what you can do.**

*The Champlain Valley Unitarian Society in Middlebury* has begun to get involved in the Green Sanctuary Program. They recycle, buy energy efficient lights, and drink Fair Trade Coffee. They have even had an energy audit done.

*The First Universalist Society in Windsor County* puts on services specifically about the environment and global warming, incorporates these issues into their religious education programs, recycles, uses energy efficient lights, and has a committee set up to monitor the congregation’s progress in meeting its goal of becoming a Green Sanctuary.

*The Unitarian Church of Montpelier* has become certified as a Green Sanctuary. They have services and educational programs about sustainability and a sustainability group that monitors the church and encourages them to keep getting better at living up to its title as a Green Sanctuary. The use biodegradable cups, recycled paper, and compact fluorescent light bulbs.



## Resources available for United Methodist churches in Vermont

**Are you aware that *The United Methodist Church* amended and readopted a resolution at the 2000 General Conference that re-affirms the values of justice and sustainability in the context of energy consumption?**

Resolution #6, The Energy Policy Statement, highlights the unique position in which humans are placed within God's creation. While humans are just one among many of God's creatures, we are also made in His image to protect the creation in which we live. The resolution compels congregants to avoid pitfalls of arrogance and irresponsibility in our use of resources and to be mindful in our energy use so as to promote justice and sustainability. It asserts the Church's support of efforts to conserve energy, increase efficiency, and transition to renewable energy sources to combat global warming; moreover, it encourages all United Methodist churches to be models for energy conservation by purchasing energy efficient appliance, exploring alternative energy sources, and heating and lighting only rooms that are in use. The full text can be found at: [http://www.umc.org/interior\\_print.asp?ptid=4&mid=958](http://www.umc.org/interior_print.asp?ptid=4&mid=958)

**Many United Methodist churches in Vermont are currently trying to fulfill this mission. Several interviewed by Middlebury College students in fall 2004 as part of a project with *Vermont Interfaith Power and Light*, provide some good suggestions for ways to do this.**

The *Champlain Island Parish* in Grande Isle told of the importance The United Methodist Church's stance on stewardship, making it part of their social principles, influences them; they place **any literature from the national UMC** sends them **about creation care in the newsletter**. They also have a special **Harvest Sunday** in the fall to celebrate the gifts that the environment has given them. There is also a significant educational unit on **stewardship within children's Sunday school**.

The *Essex United Methodist Church* in Essex Junction places a strong emphasis on **energy efficiency** within their church building. They use **reusable dishware** instead of disposal items and use only **compact fluorescent lighting**. For heating, the church uses **natural gas** instead of oil. In acknowledgement of issues of equity, the church only serves **fair trade coffee** and sometimes **fair trade chocolate**. The church also noted that many of these **environmentally-conscious measures were economically beneficial**.

The *First United Methodist Church* in Burlington expresses its ongoing consciousness of creation by have an **annual environmental stewardship awareness forum** in which environmental scholar Bill McKibben spoke last year. They represent Methodist thought about stewardship in a local **interfaith group that discusses** their concern for the **environment from a faith perspective**. The church is planning to have an **energy audit** done so that they can then focus their resources on certain energy efficiency measures.

## Resources available for Zen Buddhist meditation centers in Vermont

**Do you know that the self-realization or conviction that everything is intrinsically one, whole, and complete that is central to the Zen Buddhist faith has been a driving force for them to lead by example and address environmental issues?**

Zen Buddhist's belief that all incidents and beings are interconnected, Buddhist thought compels one to treat all living and non-living things with respect; there is not an "Other" and "Self" dichotomy. As one body, care must be given for all. Buddhism also teaches the doctrine of karma, which is the law of cause and effect. Since Buddhists believe in the law of interdependent causality, therefore, they are inspired by their faith to will be careful not to cause pain to minerals, people, animals, plants, or anything embodied in the earth because it will, in turn, be hurting themselves. The five precepts that lay Buddhists observe (in the context of the larger ten) that embody the basic moral principles of Buddhism are largely the rationale or motivation for Zen Buddhist centers to be ecologically-inclined.

**The belief in the karmic continuum and these five precepts are Zen Buddhists' greatest resource to their ecological-mindfulness.**

**While smaller than many faith communities in Vermont, a number of Buddhist meditation centers in Vermont are at the forefront of environmental consciousness are currently trying to fulfill these aforementioned principles. Several interviewed by Middlebury College students in fall 2004 as part of a project with *Vermont Interfaith Power and Light*, provide suggestions for ways to do this.**

The *Green Mountain Dharma Center (for Nuns)* in Hartland-Four-Corners follows the tenet that if one does not care for her surrounding environment and all therein (i.e. plants, mineral, animals), the human species cannot be preserved. They try to be conscious of how all actions have after-effects. Thus, they attempt to live as simply as possible to minimize their impact on the Earth by getting an efficient wood-burning furnace, using compact fluorescent light bulbs, recycling, shopping with cloth bags, eating everything on their plates, and using natural cleaning agents.

The *Vermont Zen Center* in Shelburne also finds alertness and awareness about the interconnectedness of humans and the environment central to their faith. As such, issues about simplistic living and environmental preservation, sometimes specifically about climate change, often arise in discussion groups. To embody the ideology of their faith, the center has conducted an expansion that emphasized these environmental concerns by having efficient radiant heating, compact fluorescent light bulbs, locally-harvested wood, composting, recycling, and reusable dishware.

## Coffee Talk

*Does your congregation have a coffee hour?*

If so, it would be a great time to facilitate a discussion about how the congregation views its role about how best to care for creation and each other.

*Here are some questions for you to consider as a congregation:*

- 1. What kinds of cups do we currently use?**
- 2. Where does our coffee come from?**
- 3. How does this reflect our priorities as a religious congregation?**

You would be surprised at how this sort of discussion can help you clarify both your goals as individuals and a group. It will help bring out the real motivation behind the actions you take. Clearly, if your congregation has a coffee hour, you face several choices, not just about whether to use Styrofoam, paper, or washable coffee cups, but also about whether or not to buy Fair Trade Coffee. These two decisions, although relatively simple, have implications on both your environmental impact as a group and on relations both within your congregation and in the larger global community.

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*Here are some examples from a discussion between a group of Middlebury College environmental studies students and a couple congregants at the Jericho Congregational Church in fall 2004.*

Kelly King brought up how she washed the dishes that they used for coffee hour at their church because she felt compelled to do it by faith for the sake of the environment and other people.

Nancy Carey pointed out that by choosing to use paper plates instead of washing dishes they could still be responsible and try to act in accordance with God's will but just have different priorities, like saving water and time.

Disclaimer:

The point of this handout is not to tell you what to do but rather to get your congregation to dialogue amongst themselves about their own priorities and how the actions that they take have an effect on other people and the world. At times, it is really important to stop and reflect on what you are doing and how you can make it better.



## Fair Trade Coffee



### What counts as Fair Trade??

- Coffee producers must earn at least \$1.26/lb of coffee no matter what the market price is
- Coffee producers are awarded credit at appropriate prices
- Long-term relationships between producers and corporations

### Why should we drink Fair Trade Coffee??

- It's the first product in the United States to be held accountable by independent monitors—we should ensure that producers (of all products!) are compensated fairly and work under safe conditions
- Over 100 US companies offer fair trade coffee to over 7,000 retail locations
- It's environmentally friendly! Fair trade often (but not always) means organic or shade-grown. Most fair trade coffee producers don't use chemical fertilizers or pesticides.
- Support small farmers! They should benefit from all of their hard work (average profit from gourmet-non-fair trade-coffee is \$0.50/lb. Retailers shouldn't make all the money!)

### What can you do??

- Buy fair trade coffee!! Look for the official label
- Encourage your congregation to purchase fair trade coffee for coffee hours and all other events.

## Buildings: Saving energy, \$, & the environment

handout created by  
Judith Schutter and  
Lauren Ziegler for  
VBP, 2004

### HEATING, VENTILATION & AIR CONDITIONING

- \*Seal cracks or leaks with weatherstripping or caulking.
- \*Turning thermostats down in winter and up in summer will reduce fuel consumption 3-5% for each degree.
- \*Open the windows in the fall and spring to keep building cool.
- \*Use ceiling fans in the summer.
- \*Replace air filters at least quarterly.
- \*Use ENERGY STAR approved heaters & air conditioners.

### RADIANT HEATING

Radiant heating creates an even heat distribution that makes occupants feel warm even though the air temperature might be lower than with a central air heating system. It allows boiler temperatures to be lower and have the boiler last longer.

Radiant heating (and cooling) uses water distribution instead of air distribution. While not appropriate for all buildings, some facilities that install radiant heating are 75% more efficient than standard air-based heating systems.

### ZONING

Zoning your building by partitioning it off into smaller spaces each controlled by their own thermostats can save you money and electricity by only heating or cooling the rooms in use.

### ENERGY AUDIT

An energy audit shows where significant amounts of energy is being lost. It can be conducted by an amateur or professional. Some religious institutions in Vermont have had energy audits conducted by Green Mountain Power, for example.

### COMPACT FLUORESCENT LIGHTS

Compact fluorescents are 4 X as efficient and last 10 X as long as incandescent lights. You can use them to replace traditional screw-in light fixtures. Although they cost more initially, you will save approx. \$15 per lamp per year in energy costs.

For larger spaces, use tubular fluorescent lamps rather than incandescent lights. They are 4-5 X as efficient and can last 8-20 hours longer.

### WATER HEATING

Costs associated with heating water can represent 25% of energy costs. Easy ways to reduce this costs and environmental impact:

- \*Buy a timer to turn off water heater when not in use during the week. It costs \$30 initially but can save you \$10-50/yr.
- \*Lower the thermostat.
- \*Insulate storage tank.
- \*Use efficient hot water aerators to reduce hot water consumption.

### ENERGY STAR APPLIANCES

Buying appliances labeled ENERGY STAR can save you a lot and even cut operating costs by one half. Not only do they run on less electricity, they also produce less heat. You can actually save on air conditioning by getting a good printer!

Find this and more info at:  
[www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

Search for:  
"congregations"

Also check out:  
[www.eere.energy.gov](http://www.eere.energy.gov)